

**Lived Experiences and Perceptions of International Teachers in Implementing U.S.
Curriculum: A Qualitative Phenomenological Study**

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Abstract

Global teaching opportunities have opened doors for teachers to look for prospective changes in their careers. The problem was international teachers accept offers to teach in the United States but face challenges for a smooth transition in the education system that affects students. The experiences of international teachers in implementing the U.S. curriculum are undocumented, resulting in literature gaps. The purpose of the qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of international teachers in U.S. classrooms in the education system. The study focused on the transitional and social challenges of international teachers that affect the smooth transition in the U.S. education system and teachers' pedagogical approach that influences the expectations of the U.S. education system. Deardoff's intercultural competency theory and Lave and Wenger's situated learning theory served as the theoretical framework. The target population was international teachers who earned a United States teaching license with a minimum of 1 year of teaching in an East Coast school district. Seventeen international teachers were selected through the purposive sampling technique, and semi-structured interviews were conducted. Data collection included transcripts, audio recordings, and reflexive notes. Otter.ai and Microsoft Teams were used to transcribe the data. Thematic analysis resulted in themes such as cultural adjustment, social inclusion, student performance, teacher interaction, and support system. Findings revealed international teachers experienced challenges during the initial years, but there was gradual improvement in their performance through support. Policymakers and recruiters should provide comprehensive support through international teacher programs and mentoring programs.

Keywords: abroad, international teachers, migration, native teacher

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my dad, Rathinam Kannan, and mother, Vani K, for their unwavering support and guidance. They instilled in me the deepest truth that knowledge is power. I am deeply grateful for their unconditional love and belief in my future.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In the era of globalization and technology, the education system demands improvement in the quality and status of teaching to meet the needs of the increasing diversity of learners (Ragusa et al., 2022). Teachers are expected to be effective by developing competencies through advanced, in-depth knowledge of the subject and be able to target individual students' needs (Gore et al., 2019). Twenty-first-century teachers adjust their pedagogical perceptions to focus on diverse student-centered learning environments (Devier, 2019). The quality of the learning experience depends on effective teaching and students' approach to learning (Bobe & Cooper, 2020). The evolving classroom environment reflects diversity and immersive teaching experiences in other countries with international colleagues and students can support the globalization of literacy and cultural responsiveness in instructional practices (Brandon et al., 2022).

Research reveals that teacher burnout and stress are a result of escalating demands of the work environment (Turner & Garvis, 2023), and deteriorating job satisfaction resulting in discontentment in the workplace (Falcón, 2020). Due to the shortage of teachers, there is a rise in international teacher recruitment in subjects like mathematics, special education, and science (Hash, 2021). Educators worldwide seek employment in U.S. schools to experience cultural exchange and explore diverse challenges while aspiring to acquire knowledge and skills (Saloviita, 2020). Understanding the lives and transitional experiences clarifies the history in ways that other external sources cannot (Dzikai Javangwe, 2021). Teachers from different parts of the world make transitional choices to teach in U.S. schools due to job openings in high-needs areas (Saloviita, 2020). School leaders attempt to address the needs of students from diverse ethnic backgrounds by recruiting educators from other countries.

Teachers entering the U.S. globally to teach in varied positions bring immense knowledge and cultural exchange entities (Martin & Mulvihill, 2019) to share with students, parents, colleagues, and the community. Teachers from other countries tactically accept this opportunity for personal and professional growth, enhancement of teaching beliefs, and exchange of culture and diversity (Langdon et al., 2019). With the right set of circumstances to work in the new environment, international teachers experience transitional challenges. Moving from their comfort zone to navigate the customs and unfamiliar cultural and national contexts is a major challenge (Yeji & Minsik, 2020). Accommodating to the new lifestyle and practices and learning new teaching skills can be hard during the first 2 years of teaching abroad (Çakmak et al., 2019).

Research on pedagogical and cultural transitions of international teachers is limited. It is crucial to explore the challenges, pedagogical transitions, and home contexts in identifying how effectively international teachers adapt and implement the U.S. curriculum. The experiences of these teachers can provide insight into the awareness and preparedness to support future recruitment. Further research on international teachers' perceptions in U.S. classrooms and interaction with students is necessary (Ganley et al., 2019). Overall, more than their perceptions, it is vital to elucidate the teachers' needs to become better prepared and trained to teach in a diverse classroom with diverse learning needs (Papadopoulou et al., 2022). The background of the problem, statement of the problem, purpose, significance of the study, research questions, theoretical framework, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and research method for exploring the lived experiences of international teachers are presented.

Background of the Problem

School district leaders are constantly recruiting teachers to fill vacant positions yearly due to an increase in teacher turnover (Hash, 2021). Teachers are either leaving schools or leaving

the profession due to the challenges in the work environment such as difficult students, lack of administrative support, workload, and dissatisfaction (Falcón, 2020). Transitioning to a different work environment often requires some change in how teachers view their work (Kohonen, 2004). This transition helps teachers devote themselves to learning new skills, social behaviors, and new methodologies to meet the requirements of the new situation (Nicholson, 1984).

Schools across the United States face serious teacher shortages that have led to an increase in international teacher recruitment. According to the Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA; 2023), one in seven educators did not return to a teaching position in the same East Coast school district. Districts reported a 39% increase in teacher vacancies. CERRA reported that districts had a 39% increase in teacher vacancies and about 21–36% of new hires are recent graduates. The 2022–2023 school year began with about 1,400 vacant positions (CERRA; 2023).

Teaching opportunities in countries like the United States provide adequate exposure to cultural awareness and self-efficacy (Martin & Mulvihill, 2019). The employment needs of educators hailing from countries like Jamaica, India, China, the Philippines, and Europe correlate to the teacher needs in the U.S. (Saloviita, 2020). Such individuals bring a wealth of knowledge, experience, and cultural competencies to support multicultural education. Culture shock, inappropriate behavior of students, an unfamiliar environment, and communication gaps are some challenges (Ospina & Medina, 2020). These challenges lead to certain factors that must be taken into consideration while recruiting international teachers and retaining them to benefit the needs of the schools.

International teachers most often undergo transitional experiences that may help or hinder their ability to exhibit their full potential; thereby ineffectively implementing the curriculum.

Consistent support from the schools and ongoing professional development need to be considered to help international teachers successfully implement the curriculum. United States students lack the knowledge and competencies, so their culture seems normal, and they have difficulties understanding and valuing the world from other cultures (Ganley et al., 2019).

Statement of the Problem

The problem was international teachers accept offers to teach in the United States but face challenges for a smooth transition in the education system that affects students. There is a necessity to delve into the transitional experiences of international teachers in implementing the U.S. curriculum which plays a vital role in student learning (Thomas, 2019). Regardless of the subject area, the teacher shortage has continued to be a problem (Devier, 2019). International teachers seek employment in U.S. schools to teach high-needs subjects such as special education, mathematics, science, and Spanish (Ceballos, 2020).

Teachers are sponsored by the State Department of Education or public-school districts on different work visas (Cox, 2012). Recruitment companies, alternate teacher certification programs, and teacher programs also supply the demand for teachers (Sutcher et al., 2019). Ten percent of new hires were recent completers of an alternative certification program (CERRA, 2023). The report also shows a 2% increase in international teacher recruitment. The purpose of the Fulbright-Hays Act was to increase mutual understanding among the people of the United States. Even though there is limited research on the perception of international teachers in effectively implementing the U.S. curriculum, Thomas (2019) stated that due to the rise in popularity of international teaching, there exist some challenges in establishing a consistent educational environment conducive to learning.

Effective implementation of the curriculum is directly impacted by the problems and challenges (Goldhaber et al., 2020) that teachers may face during the beginning years of teaching in public schools. Learning, adjusting, and managing cultural differences may be challenging during this time of placement. Adaptability to U.S. classrooms may be one factor that hinders the competency levels of international teachers. Teachers hired to teach specialized subject areas have a bachelor's or a master's degree with an undergraduate degree in education and have highly performed in their home countries. Certain external challenges, such as inappropriate behavior, insufficient training to teach new curricula, and technology-enhanced instructions may challenge international teachers to do their jobs effectively.

Research stated that current teacher education programs do not focus on helping teachers analyze and interpret student behavior (Michalsky, 2021). Studies have focused on native teachers' perceptions in U.S. classrooms, but there is a need to explore the lived experiences of international teachers due to the increased number of job fillings to support the teacher shortage problem. Exploring the lived experiences and perceptions of international teachers may add to the existing literature and help recruiters understand the transitional challenges to improve the current obstacles that the teachers face. The international teachers' pedagogical approach influencing the expectations of U.S. classrooms will be an added advantage. There is limited research available on the pedagogical and cultural transitions of international teachers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of international teachers in U.S. classrooms in the education system. This qualitative methodology supports the understanding and makes sense of human lived experiences in the education system (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The focus was on exploring the phenomena

and describing individual experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Phenomenological research explores how and why individuals behave in a certain way (Farrukh & Usmani, 2023). The rationale for the research was to describe the phenomenon of lived experiences and perceptions of international teachers through a semi-structured interview protocol.

International teachers recruited in an East Coast school district participated in the study. The criteria for purposive sampling (Ames et al., 2019) were teachers who earned a United States state teaching license with a minimum of 1 year of teaching in the school district serving at the research site. By exploring the transitional experiences and perceptions of 17 international teachers, the evidence gathered assisted in understanding teachers' needs, preferences, and support to implement the curriculum effectively.

Dedicated and enthusiastic international teachers inculcate their pedagogy and strategies to improve student learning outcomes. Deardoff's (2006) intercultural competency theory and Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning theory guided the study. Exploring international teachers' perceptions of implementing the U.S. curriculum provided insight into the phenomenon using semi-structured interviews. The study aimed to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of international teachers and describe the phenomenon.

Significance of the Study

International teachers experience challenges in U.S. schools that may remain untold (Ospina & Medina, 2020). The qualitative phenomenological study could contribute to the already existing research and help to identify the lived experiences of participants within a group context (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Through the lived experiences described by participants, the information was gathered to determine and understand the perceptions and practices of international teachers and their environment.

Data collected from descriptive lived experiences may be useful for future researchers. Recruiters and school district leaders may be able to use the data to guide themselves in meeting the needs of their current and future international employees (Papadopoulou et al., 2022). The study may help to prepare teachers to meet the standards and expectations of U.S. classrooms. Experiences described by the participants can promote positive social change by helping teachers view each other's limitations, attitudes, and beliefs by supporting them to work together. Study results can be shared with the school district, universities and companies that offer teacher certification programs, and policymakers.

Research Questions

Qualitative research provides in-depth knowledge of the lived experiences, beliefs, and attitudes of the participants (Glover et al., 2020). This phenomenological study explored the lived experiences and perceptions of international teachers in implementing the U.S. curriculum. The study was guided by the following questions:

Research Question 1: What lived experiences do international teachers identify as obstacles for a smooth transition in the U.S. education system?

Research Question 2: What social challenges do international teachers face that affect smooth transition in the U.S. education system?

Research Question 3: How does international teachers' pedagogical approach influence the expectations of the U.S. education system?

Theoretical Framework

Deardoff's (2006) intercultural competency theory and Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning theory guided the study. International teachers seek job opportunities globally to explore, travel, and acquire advanced knowledge (Mizzi, 2021). The attitudes, knowledge, and

skills used to effectively communicate with others from cultural backgrounds refer to intercultural competency theory (Deardoff, 2006). Teachers communicate with colleagues, students, and parents coming from different cultural backgrounds. In this context, international teachers entering U.S. classrooms readily exhibit qualifications and intercultural and global competencies to teach diverse learners (Papadopoulou et al., 2022).

Everyone is unique (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Interaction between international teachers and students establishes positive relationships, which is a vital part of the teaching-learning process (Ganley et al., 2019). Due to a lack of teachers in U.S. schools, international teachers are recruited to teach high-needs subjects. During this tenure, a connection of intercultural exchanges of international teachers with students and colleagues helps develop attitudes and skills takes place. The theories supported the study because the lived experiences of individuals that establish competencies and positive relationships were explored. Interview questions connected to the research questions were used to explore the experiences and perceptions of international teachers. Deardoff's intercultural competency theory (2006) helped to identify how international teachers would effectively engage and share their viewpoints on the pedagogical approach. Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory focused on the individuality and uniqueness of each international teacher and their experiences. The literature review provides further in-depth descriptions and details relating to the two theories.

Definitions of Terms

The main terminologies and their definitions are necessary and consistent in the study (Moskovitz, 2021). Definitions provided a clear understanding of the basic concepts and terms used throughout the study. Peer-reviewed sources maintained the validity and reliability of the

concepts (Okuzaki et al., 2019). The following definitions helped in understanding the context of terms used about international teachers' lived experiences and perceptions.

Abroad is defined as a country that is not one's home country (Milford & Grieve, 2022).

International teachers are defined as teachers who choose to relocate from national to international teaching contexts (Poole, 2019).

Migration is defined as leaving one place of residence or working for another due to several reasons (Templon et al., 2021).

Native teachers are defined as educators who live and teach in their country of birth (Seah, 2021).

Assumptions

Assumptions are essential issues or ideas in the study taken for granted and viewed as reasonable and widely accepted (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). The assumption a phenomenological study holds is that participants have a distinctive sense of reality (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Researchers should be transparent when making assumptions and test the sensibility of their results for robustness (Shand & Bowden, 2022). Transparency is reporting what will happen in each stage of the study (Haven et al., 2022). Reasonable assumptions about the study increase valid, reliable, and credible results. The major assumption in the study was trustworthiness and receiving clear, truthful, and complete responses from participants during the semi-structured interviews using the phenomenological approach. Following ethical procedures becomes important in collecting the data and preserving participants' information confidentially.

Lastly, the research may benefit future international teachers seeking to teach in United States schools. The study will contribute to the existing literature on international teachers and may be used for further research. Exploring the lived experiences and perceptions of

international teachers may lead to new insight and provide a broader perspective on support and guidance among school leaders and recruiters.

Scope and Delimitations

Scope defines the guidelines the study covers (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). The scope of the study covered an East Coast school district. Deardoff's (2006) intercultural competency theory and Lave and Wenger's (1991) formed the framework to explore the lived perceptions of international teachers. The purpose of the qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of international teachers in U.S. classrooms in the education system. International teachers in the school district voluntarily participated in the study by signing the informed consent. Participants answered the research questions by sharing their perceptions using the semi-structured interview questions.

Delimitations should be conscious, deliberate choices about what will and will not be researched and limit the scope (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). Delimitations are scattered throughout the problem, purpose, and participants of the study. A delimitation of the study was to only concentrate on the East Coast school district due to the limited time allotted for the study. The results of the research may be transferable as the study provides thick descriptions of the data (O'Donnell Goldensher, 2023) but may not be generalized (Ospina & Medina, 2020).

Limitations

Limitations occur outside the control of the researcher and are possible weaknesses in the study (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). A common limitation that may obstruct a qualitative study is participants' attrition, lack of open and clear responses from participants, and a smaller sample size due to time constraints (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The qualitative phenomenological approach (Moustakas, 1994) focuses more on the description of the

experiences of the participants and less on the researcher's interpretation (Coker, 2022).

Participants were limited to international teachers who had a minimum of 1 year of teaching experience at the research site. Limiting the participants to international teachers might limit the information that could be collected from participants' colleagues and school leaders.

Bias and assumptions were addressed by bracketing to explore the phenomenon as explained by the participants. The quality of the data and success of the study can be limited based on the information imparted by participants during the interview. Seventeen participants were selected from a large population of about 160 international teachers working in the school district. Because the study was focused on one-third of the population of the school district, including additional schools may support the methodology and the ability to generalize the research findings. A phenomenological study relies on individual participants' experiences and the perceptions being subjective, so they may not be transferable to other settings (Suddick et al., 2020).

Chapter Summary

The teaching profession has evolved to find different ways to adjust pedagogical perceptions and include adaptive changes to focus on diverse learning environments. A teacher shortage (Devier, 2019) is experienced in school districts due to the high demands of the work environment leading to burnout and stress (Turner & Garvis, 2023). Amidst the shortages, U.S. borders have opened paths for international teachers to teach in schools. The purpose of the qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of international teachers in U.S. classrooms in the education system. The need to understand the teachers' transitional challenges and obstacles is crucial, especially in the wake of teacher shortages and increasingly diverse classrooms.

Deardoff's (2006) intercultural competency theory and Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated theory were used to explore the experiences of international teachers. The research questions guided the study to uncover the lived experiences of international teachers in the East Coast school district. To ensure objectivity, personal experiences and thoughts of the researcher were addressed using epoché, or suspension of judgment (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The results of the study may help recruiters, future international teachers, and school leaders in improving practices and exchange visitor programs. In the following Chapter 2, a review of the existing literature, including the research gap is detailed.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The teacher shortage has continued to be a problem across the country regardless of the subject area (Devier, 2019). Along with special education, there is a high demand for math and science teachers in the U.S., as well as a rise in international teacher recruitment to supply the demand. The U.S. recruits and employs teachers from different parts of the world to teach in the classrooms (Cakmak et al., 2019). Teachers bring in immense knowledge of content and cultural entities to share with the students, colleagues, and community. International teachers grab this opportunity for personal and professional growth, enhance their teaching beliefs, exchange culture, and learn from the environment (Langdon et al., 2019). Enthusiastic and highly qualified international teachers experience challenges during the transition.

The problem was international teachers accept offers to teach in the United States but face challenges for a smooth transition in the education system that affects students. Due to the lack of U.S.-certified teachers to fill teacher jobs, school administrators hired international teachers, certified in other countries without experience, required to use the U.S. curriculum. International teachers experience obstacles and challenges such as cultural differences, unfamiliar working conditions, new methods of teaching, and inappropriate behavior of learners in U.S. schools. An increase in international teachers to supplement the teacher shortages requires guidelines for a smooth transition (Thomas, 2019).

There is a need to explore lived experiences and challenges in the effective implementation of the U.S. curriculum (Thomas, 2019). Even though the opportunity to teach in the U.S. calls for a new educational and cultural environment, the obstacles and challenges obstruct the smooth transition. Some challenges include accent, interaction with colleagues and students, cultural differences, teacher beliefs, lack of support, and effective accomplishment in

teaching the U.S. curriculum. The purpose of the qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of international teachers in U.S. classrooms in the education system.

Many factors like socioeconomic, cultural, and political may not correlate with the international teachers' understanding of how schools look from prior experience and the current environment in U.S. schools (Sahling & De Carvalho, 2021). Unfamiliar teaching situations may lead to poor interaction with teachers, colleagues, students, and staff. These situations in turn may cause many international teachers to leave their jobs and go back to their home countries. Teachers' beliefs are a set of principles and values of teachers regarding the overall performance in the workplace (Dos Santos, 2019). An insight into teacher beliefs and their influence in U.S. classrooms needs to be explored. Job satisfaction refers to the teachers' feelings about their jobs, attitudes, and expectations that influence the line of work (Falcón, 2020).

Culture shock plays a major role in making such decisions to quit jobs in the U.S. School-level and policy-level influences impact job satisfaction and retention rate (Hayes et al., 2020). Current literature indicated a research gap in the support system (Kaur et al., 2021) while few studies exist on teacher beliefs and classroom practices (Dos Santos, 2019). The literature review focuses on the literature search strategy, and theoretical framework based on key terms, such as international teachers, perceptions, transitional experiences, challenges, obstacles, content knowledge, teacher beliefs, and summary aligned with the purpose of the study.

Literature Search Strategy

Resources for this study were researched using the key terms identified in the title, topics, subtopics, and overarching themes. Research was focused primarily on studies, articles, and journals published between the years 2019-2024. The source of the theories was used with

seminal author citations. Databases used in the research were ACE library, EBSCOhost, ERIC, JSTOR, Google Scholar, ProQuest, and SAGE. Reviewing the sources referenced in the selected articles, journals, and dissertations led to other studies. Searches were conducted using keywords commonly associated with *international teachers, recruitment, teacher shortages, challenges, experiences, teacher beliefs, curriculum, and culture, cultural competence, pedagogy, content knowledge, professional development, mentoring, and lived experiences*:-

Theoretical Framework

Deardoff's (2006) intercultural competency theory and Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning theory formed the theoretical framework of the study. Existing research on the framework of understanding international education teachers is about taking considering the positive and negative aspects of teaching in international schools (Poole, 2019). Teachers negotiate with students, colleagues, and supervisors to constantly prove themselves and their knowledge of the subject. Teacher stress is directly correlated to job satisfaction. Lack of job satisfaction reciprocates in teachers leaving their jobs creating teacher shortages. Few studies have determined that international teachers experience the same challenges with the inclusion of culture shock, anxiety, nervousness, and helplessness (Kaur et al., 2021). Globalization of job opportunities has opened the door for teachers seeking careers in an international school to explore, travel (Mizzi, 2021), and sometimes plan to live permanently.

Intercultural Competency Theory

Intercultural competency theory includes attitudes, knowledge, and skills that allow people to effectively communicate with people from other cultural backgrounds (Deardoff, 2006). Creating a culture of inclusion and understanding cultural differences can be transformative in diverse classrooms. The theory relates to the connections and enrichment of

intercultural participation between individuals during cultural exchanges (Kalčić, 2021). This theory advocates the cultural exchanges that happen during the transition of international teachers from their home country to the U.S. The ability to engage effectively with people of other cultures is intercultural competency (Ganley et al., 2019). Effective engagement with people creates a mutual exchange of culture, authenticity, cuisine, strategies, and many more interesting facts. The ability to respect and understand others' cultures and viewpoints is an essential part of intercultural competency (Zheng et al., 2022).

The exchange of civilizations influences a give-and-take policy with an in-depth understanding of cultural habits and reasons behind those differences. Intercultural competency theory encourages opportunities to listen, talk, and understand to further benefit from communication (Kalčić, 2021). Teachers communicate with teacher peers, students, or parents from diverse cultures and countries (Zheng et al., 2022). Regardless of their culture, teachers teach students of various cultural backgrounds. Moreover, with the increase of international teachers in U.S. schools to fill the vacant certified teaching positions, there is a need for a change in mindsets with respect and openness for other cultures.

Teachers are required to exhibit high qualifications, with intercultural and global competencies in terms of skills, flexibility, teaching procedures, attitudes of tolerance, and acceptance to teach the diverse learners of the 21st century (Papadopoulou et al., 2022). International teachers are curious about the ongoing development in their job environment, are open-minded to receive support, and value the U.S. culture. Teachers discover methods, strategies, and techniques to learn the new curriculum that is varied from the curriculum they learned or taught in their home country. They are expected to use the knowledge they attained in their home country by becoming proactive in the effective implementation of the U.S.

curriculum. Teachers engage to become responsible citizens since education conveys the values and achieves the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the United States (Kalčić, 2021).

Situated Learning Theory

A situated learning theory is based on the assumption that everyone is unique in and of themselves (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This means that the understanding of concepts changes as the social contexts change (Limin et al., 2021). Lave and Wenger described *situated learning* as a process that occurs through conforming participation in communities of practice (O'Brien & Battista, 2020). Communities of practice establish social learning systems for circulating skills, methodologies, and innovations (Booth, 2022). A situated learning environment gives opportunities to collaborate, reflect, and engage in real-life scenarios.

Students learn from different cultures and backgrounds and hence experience a progression in learning paths (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The theory helps to understand the importance of relationships and interactions between international teachers and host teachers and connects through guidance and support through mentoring (O'Brien & Battista, 2020). Teacher-learner relationships and interactions rely on sharing knowledge of culture, methods, strategies, and personalities. Knowledge of students is important in effectively delivering instruction. International teachers become successful in establishing positive relationships with students through social interaction and collaboration which is an essential part of learning (Ganley et al., 2019).

Due to the lack of U.S. certified teachers to fill teacher jobs in the U.S., international teachers are recruited to teach subjects like math, science, and special education (Devier, 2019). During their tenure in U.S. schools, teachers commonly interact with colleagues and students.

Through this interaction, there is an interchange of culture, methodologies, interests, and hobbies.

Intercultural competency theory and situated learning theory blend to create the framework because there exists a connection of intercultural exchanges in attitudes, knowledge, skills, experiences, and culture between international teachers and individuals in the school. There is also an understanding of the uniqueness of themselves, methods, strategies, and positive relationships through participation in communities of practice (Booth, 2022). The theories supported the purpose of the study which is to explore the lived experiences of international teachers in U.S. classrooms in the education system.

Research Literature Review

Teachers' ongoing growth contributed to their retention in the teaching profession and improvement in the quality of their teaching skills and pedagogy (Akiri & Dori, 2022). International teachers aspire to work globally to acquire knowledge, skills, and experiences. Studies showed that such educators experience increased levels of self-confidence, flexibility, adaptability, and interpersonal skills (Mikulec, 2019). U.S. classrooms have become diverse (Brandon et al., 2022) with the increasingly high recruitment of international teachers due to the teacher shortage. International teachers fill crucial positions, especially in high-needs areas such as mathematics and science (Ceballos, 2020).

Teaching abroad provides ample exposure to personal and professional growth by indicating increased cultural awareness and self-efficacy (Martin & Mulvihill, 2019) but this also brings challenges. School culture plays a major role in accepting international teachers to teach U.S. students which increases geo-cultural knowledge (Ganley et al., 2019). Student discipline is also a cause of teacher frustration and burnout (Dos Santos, 2019). An examination of the

research, points to some characteristics that influence the study such as teacher shortages (Ceballos, 2020), increased international teacher recruitment (Hash, 2021), international teachers in the U.S., challenges (Falcón, 2020) faced during the transition, international teachers in the U.S. classroom, content knowledge and teacher beliefs, teacher interaction with students and other teachers, school climate and support (Çakmak et al., 2019), professional development, and mentorship (Langdon et al., 2019). These characteristics play a major role in the transition of international teachers and adapting to the U.S. environment and teaching the U.S. curriculum.

Teacher Shortages

A national database predicts an estimated teacher shortage of 112,000 in 2017 (Sutcher et al., 2019), and that the shortage could reach 200,000 in 2025 (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). The shortage of teachers has become one of the major issues in the school system. These shortages in high-needs areas are more in urban and rural areas that serve economically disadvantaged learners (Hash, 2021). Azano et al. (2019) stated there is research evidence of adequate staffing in rural classrooms. Teacher turnover results in teacher migration or attrition, where migration describes moving to other schools, while attrition is leaving the professions (Toropova et al., 2021).

There have been many studies conducted on the reasons for teacher shortages. Higher salaries are associated with lower teacher turnover (Ingersoll et al., 2019). Teacher shortages directly impact student learning by creating a learning gap and low performance in test scores (Hash, 2021). The decrease in the supply of certified teachers has affected learners and schools across the U.S. Teacher autonomy relates to working time, style, and content (Han & Wang, 2023). This is an effect of external factors such as compensation, teacher burnout, lack of influence over school policies, and lack of autonomy in making decisions (Sawastsky et al.,

2020) in the classroom. Ingersoll et al. (2019) also stated that the relationship between student discipline problems and teacher turnover was in the same direction. Teacher shortages contribute to the inequality of K–12 education when certified teachers migrate to schools offering higher salaries, incentives, and better work conditions (Hash, 2021).

Han and Wang (2022) found that poor work conditions were responsible for lower satisfaction levels. Poor work conditions include poor administrative support, unsafe environment, large class sizes, insufficient resources, and lack of professional development opportunities. Shortages are across subject areas and are increasing as the demands of teachers are not met. Schools are facing challenges in recruiting teachers to teach subjects like math, science, special education, and foreign languages (Falcón, 2020). The flexibility in classrooms depends on how teachers can understand and adapt to the circumstances (Deed et al., 2020). The imbalance in demand and supply has led to the recruitment of international teachers in the U.S. This imbalance has created havoc in U.S. education by disrupting the goals and objectives of providing unbiased education for learners (Garcia & Weiss, 2019).

Creating a trusting environment for teachers by providing personal and professional support is essential (Thomas, 2019). Geographic and demographic attributes can also be taken into consideration in teacher recruitment and retention (McHenry-Sorber & Campbell, 2019). Educators choose to work in a community that will support growth and respect their teaching pedagogy by extending resources to develop into expatriate educators (Sahling & De Carvalho, 2021).

Increased International Teacher Recruitment

Recent studies have discussed the increase in international teacher recruitment to help with teacher shortages. Teacher shortages in high-need areas are filled by international teachers.

School districts are employing recruitment strategies to motivate international teachers to teach in U.S. schools (Kissau et al., 2019). Educators across the world seek job opportunities in the U.S. for many reasons. Kissau et al. (2019) also stated that there is a lack of a strong research base, as little is known about what motivates teachers to pursue a career in foreign countries. More globally oriented teachers are traveling internationally to experience a different culture (Mikulec, 2019). The need for international teachers grew from replacing teacher shortages to accepting diversification, beliefs, culture, and perspectives (Aslan, 2019).

As the teaching profession is becoming globalized, teachers are willing to migrate to different countries as international teachers (Mizzi, 2021). Through the internet, educators across the world have access to school requirements and job openings. State departments are working closely with teacher recruitment agencies that provide teachers to teach in any subject area. The J1 exchange visitor program, H1B work visa, and permanent residency allow foreign nationals to work legally in the U.S. (Nganga, 2011). Leaders believe that there is increased acceptance of culture in the community and education system (Chuang et al., 2020).

Teachers hail from India, China, the Philippines, Europe, Jamaica, and other countries to explore teaching experiences and be culturally responsive (Saloviita, 2020). Culturally responsive teachers do a better job of teaching because they know how to appreciate cultural differences and help promote positive relationships with learners (Cherng & Davis, 2019). This opening has led several certified and highly qualified educators to join U.S. schools to teach specialized subjects. International teachers with certain years of experience and educational qualifications are eligible to seek positions in U.S. schools (Cox, 2012). The demand for teachers in the U.S. has been supported by the influx of international teachers (Sutcher et al., 2019).

Full-time teaching positions have given multiple chances for international teachers to stay in the U.S. and acquire experiences. Policymakers staff their schools with high-quality teachers to provide authentic learning to the students (Goldhaber et al., 2020). These teachers are exceptional educators employed in a variety of content areas such as math, science, special education, English as a second language, and foreign languages (Ceballos, 2020). International teacher recruitment helps to build a positive relationship with the host school and promotes multicultural awareness (Cherng & Davis, 2019).

Teachers must understand the strengths and assets of the rural places, the communities, and the culture where they will live, learn, and teach (Azano et al., 2019). International teachers support the school system by investing their plethora of knowledge, content, and the curriculum they know (Aslan, 2019). They contribute to the welfare of the school districts by accomplishing all the duties and responsibilities of their colleagues (Cakmak et al., 2019). Teacher exchange programs significantly alter the lives of educators and widen the path toward receiving a broader perspective on teaching (Ospina & Medina, 2020). As the teacher shortages increase, the specialized subject areas are filled by international teachers (Hash, 2021) which could be the beginning of a new journey for them.

International Teachers in the United States

Due to the increase in teacher shortages, international teachers are recruited to fill the vacant positions in U.S. schools (Hash, 2021). International teachers are recruited through teacher exchange programs designed for developing nations (Dalal et al., 2020) that collaborate with the state Department of Education and agencies that help recruit international teachers. Many school districts contract with these private agencies to recruit international teachers on visas with a minimum of 2 years of teaching experience (Cox, 2012). Teachers become culturally

aware to practice the skills necessary to be successful in the profession and apply them in their new educational environment.

Global teaching opportunities positively influence teaching skills and help cultivate cultural competencies (Mizzi, 2021). The exchange of culture, language, educational reforms, and practices with colleagues creates a culturally strong environment in the schools. Teachers in cultural exchange programs raise their awareness and competencies to support multicultural education (Karacabey et al., 2019). International teachers implement their teaching strategies and methodologies from the first day of their experience in the U.S. classroom. Moreover, being first-year teachers in the U.S. regardless of years of experience in their home country, they undergo an induction process (Sutcher et al., 2019). Induction is offered to new teachers starting their role by explaining the policies, giving resources, and providing professional development throughout the year (Mitchell et al., 2019). Teachers are formally evaluated and supported by a mentor (Gul et al., 2019). Challenges in recruitment and retention have intensified the need for sustained learning opportunities for new teachers to enhance the quality of their practice (Langdon et al., 2019).

International recruitments are competent, hardworking, and dedicated teachers contribute to the U.S. education system by improving student learning outcomes (Nulhakim et al., 2020). Teachers invest their content knowledge, ideas, strategies, techniques, and teaching styles in U.S. classrooms. Moreover, teachers are equally involved in decision-making, professional development, professional learning communities, and community-oriented activities. Educational leaders look for individual personal and professional qualities to impute to the social environment of the school (Tamir, 2021).

Educators respect and understand each other's cultural contexts (Zheng et al., 2022), thereby achieving harmony among the faculty and staff. A multicultural educational environment is created by teachers with cultural diversity by implementing this cultural heritage into the teaching-learning process (Aslan, 2019). International teachers explore opportunities for cultural sensitivity and awareness while using their educational qualifications (Thomas, 2019). Teachers also inspire learners when selecting career paths by giving them global exposure (Mizzi, 2021).

Challenges Faced During the Transition

The motivation behind international teachers coming from different countries to pursue a career in the U.S. may be to seek cross-cultural experience, salary, family needs, exposure to new lifestyles, or to contribute to society (Kissau et al., 2019). International learning experiences require teachers to move from their comfort zones and navigate to unfamiliar cultural and national contexts (Yeji & Minsik, 2020). Teachers undergo personal, professional, and academic challenges to meet the expectations of U.S. classrooms. Initial experiences of unease, confusion, anxiety, and fear contribute to stress and negative outcomes in teachers (Kaur et al., 2021).

Transitioning to a new country is challenging due to the many cultural changes experienced by teachers. The transitional period is set to be 1 to 2 years from the day teachers land in the U.S. (Cox, 2012). Known facts of the new place are unsure and the unknown factors are yet to be identified. Çakmak et al. (2019) indicated that new teachers in the U.S. face a variety of difficulties or unfamiliar conditions as they learn new skills in new settings. The major challenge faced by international teachers is leaving their home country and accommodating the lifestyle of the U.S. land. Recruitment and retention in U.S. schools influence the number of years of stay which is a significant factor for the teachers to perform well during their tenure and hence travel all alone leaving the family in their home country.

Attributes of effective teaching are based on teachers' skills in teaching, classroom management strategies, subject matter, and how students learn and develop (Tamir, 2021). Classroom management is another major challenge that teachers experience (Gaias et al., 2019). Teachers dispense positive contributions to the teaching-learning process to inculcate an authentic and realistic learning environment. Educators are required to adapt their practices in response to the flexible learning environment (Deed et al., 2020). Challenges in dealing with inappropriate behaviors of students give international teachers less time to deliver effective lessons in U.S. classrooms (Gaias et al., 2019).

Teachers' self-efficacy is at risk due to them having to handle behavior issues and complete the task of teaching. Educators juggle between instructing, handling students' inappropriate behavior, being prepared to face adverse situations, and planning to face undetermined obstacles (Ingersoll et al., 2019). Such challenges add to the difficulties they already experience in adapting to the new environment and transitioning into a new teaching environment (Cakmak et al., 2019).

Teachers become transformative individuals (Karacabey et al., 2019), understand their identity, and work harder regardless of the daily challenges they face as foreigners. Living and teaching in an unfamiliar environment summons anxiety, fear, and the will to give up (Thomas, 2019). New approaches, culture shock, unfamiliar structural and organizational arrangements, communication gaps, and problems with teacher-student relationships are some examples of cross-national experiences (Ospina & Medina, 2020). Transitioning from teaching one curriculum to teaching the U.S. curriculum takes time. Teaching in a real classroom coupled with challenging unfamiliar cultures, curriculum, and work settings may leave international teachers perplexed (Kaur et al., 2021).

International Teachers in the U.S. Classroom

As a result of teacher shortages, international teachers are placed in vacant positions to teach high-need subject areas like math, science, special education, and foreign language (Devier, 2019). The potential staffing challenges in rural districts lead to the inclusion of international teacher programs that invite certified teachers to teach in U.S. classrooms (Goldhaber et al., 2020). Benefits, value, and engaging in intercultural experiences help in global interconnectedness (Bletscher & Hellmann, 2022). These teachers are highly qualified in their subject area with a minimum of 3 years of teaching experience. The recruiting process is tedious and energetic, enthusiastic, hardworking individuals are selected through face-to-face or virtual interviews (Cox, 2012). Teachers from different parts of the world who specialize in different subjects are employed by U.S. schools (Çakmak et al., 2019).

Teachers benefit from both personal and professional growth (Ospina & Medina, 2020) and are willing to present their content knowledge, life skills, teaching methodologies, and strategies to their learners. Challenges to presenting their ideology led to questioning their self-efficacy (Martin & Mulvihill, 2019). Educators constantly search for solutions to day-to-day problems that arise in the classroom by reaching out to a peer, mentor, or administration. Collaborations among teachers benefit each other from collective knowledge and experiences (Ganley et al., 2019). Students get opportunities to make connections with teachers from other countries (Cherng & Davis, 2019).

Experiences are built upon their strengths to overcome the challenges and weaknesses to continuously search for ever-lasting problems inside the classroom (Papadopoulou et al., 2022). International teachers' education influences the education community (Sawyer, 2022) as they implement their experience, strategies, and methods from their home country. Comprehensive

factors of working conditions rely on income, working hours, and job security (Han & Wang, 2022).

Teachers' emotional investment in caring for their students is stressful (Jamil et al., 2022). Student behavior has a major role in how international teachers continue to support the education system. Foreign teachers confront multiple issues in U.S. classrooms. Transitioning to a new learning environment with students hailing from different backgrounds, learning needs, and specific learning experiences (Abedini et al., 2019) is not easy. Student misbehaviors take away instructional time. Hayes et al. (2020) stated that 13% of lesson time was used to maintain class control in 23 different countries.

Foreign nationals opt to teach in U.S. schools for many reasons including cultural exchange, and professional and personal growth (Langdon et al., 2019). Several external factors affect the effective implementation of the U.S. curriculum (Kaur et al., 2021). International teachers are challenged to implement the methods, strategies, techniques, and resources provided in the school (Booth, 2022). The U.S. education system is guided by content standards that students are expected to know and do (Schmidt et al., 2005). International teachers are new to these standards and continue to struggle to understand the objective of the standards until they receive specialized training. A deeper understanding of teacher experiences should be used to support and promote positive outcomes for both teachers and students (Jamil et al., 2022).

Classroom management is one of the major issues that impact student learning (Gaias et al., 2019). This stress threatens the goals teachers have planned for instruction and elevates the feeling of helplessness (Jamil et al., 2022). Student misbehavior challenges instructional time impacting the completion of the planned lesson, homework, or closure activity. It may result in

moving the planned activities to the next day. The challenging behavior and the teacher's interpretation of the behavior may lead to negative psychological outcomes (Jamil et al., 2022).

Content Knowledge and Teacher Beliefs

Teachers play an important role in the overall development of students and classrooms (Kırkiç & Yahşi, 2021). Shortage of teachers creates declining access to qualified teachers resulting in poor quality of teaching, achievement gaps, and unequal job outcomes (Ingersoll et al., 2019). There is an enormous loss to schools and students when qualified teachers leave high-need positions, monetarily. The change in the teaching environment may be within the state, country, or abroad (Sahling & De Carvalho, 2021). Teachers develop personal understanding, beliefs, and expectations about the objectives of their teaching (Dos Santos, 2019).

School districts employ new methods like incentives, student loan forgiveness, bonuses, and housing that might attract qualified teachers (McHenry-Sorber & Campbell, 2019). Regardless of the incredible compensation schools provide, there are many schools in the U.S. with no teachers in the classroom. Low teacher satisfaction leads to unfilled vacant positions and minimal learning happening in those classrooms. Teachers migrate from one school to another for better school climate and salaries. Poor working conditions, low salaries, and student behavior are some struggles teachers experience during their teaching practice (Çakmak et al., 2019).

Exchange visitor programs and other international recruitment pathways have opened borders for inspiring, job-oriented educators to travel abroad to achieve their educational and professional goals (Ospina & Medina, 2020). Teachers from other foreign countries seek job opportunities to invest their learning and to learn from the host community. International teachers influence the education community (Sawyer, 2022). School leaders recruit international

teachers with 3 or more years of teaching experience in the subject and are capable of implementing their expertise in their schools (Tamir, 2021). With these experiences, teachers are still considered beginning teachers due to being international. Beginning teachers need assistance in building confidence in their abilities and reflecting on their beliefs (Sawyer, 2022).

The increase in the level of students' learning is determined by the teachers' view on student learning and success (Kirkiç & Yahşi, 2021). Efficient teachers produce a high success rate in schools. The commendable content knowledge of qualified teachers is in demand and such teachers seek opportunities in schools that value their abilities. Teachers' beliefs represent their cognitive structures and performance in interpreting and applying their knowledge in the classrooms (Kirkiç & Yahşi, 2021). An analysis of patterns of student learning, their needs, learning gaps, and other factors is taken into consideration by effective teachers (Gore et al., 2019).

Teacher Interaction

Mikulec (2019) stated that interpersonal skills included teachers conveying ideas to others, using different perspectives to make decisions, and interacting with people who are different from them. Globalization has increased the percentage of interactions between people of different origins and cultures (Chuang et al., 2022). Multicultural education prepares teachers to efficiently interact with students and parents (Bybee et al., 2021). The behavior of teachers led to students' understanding of the concept while students' interactive behavior produced appropriate responses to teachers (Yanzhu Zhang, 2022). This section used studies from both teacher-student and teacher-student perspectives. Teacher collaboration is relative to the situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Educational researchers symbolize the teaching-learning process with interaction theory to study teacher-student and teacher-teacher interactions (Yanzhu Zhang, 2022). International teachers have a greater challenge to discover during their transition from their home country to the host country. The initial years of teaching are a crucial time for international teachers as they experience challenges and unfamiliar working conditions (Cakmak et al., 2019). Teachers are anxious about classroom arrangement, interaction with their students and host teachers, expanding interpersonal skills, and communication in English (Kaur et al., 2021).

During the transition, teachers have a minimum understanding of the culture, background, and learning styles of U.S. students. The prior knowledge and experience in their home country would not help them to understand the unfamiliar situations that arise every day in the classroom (Poole, 2019). Students learn in a multicultural environment to acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills to function in a diverse community (Bybee et al., 2021). Upon entering the new education system, teachers need sufficient time to understand the U.S. curriculum, methodology, strategies, techniques to deliver instruction, access to materials, technology integration, and several other responsibilities in the school. School climate directly correlates to engagement in school activities (Lombardi et al., 2019).

Lave and Wenger (1991) emphasized newcomers entering new environments and getting acclimated. Teachers have to frequently interact with their peers, students, staff, and administration (Karacabey et al., 2019). Teachers establish positive relationships by interacting and collaborating as an essential part of learning in the new environment (Ganley et al., 2019). Some teachers may have taught in other countries before coming to the U.S. (Mikulec, 2019). Those experiences may be an added advantage if the culture and school environment were

almost the same (Sahling & De Carvalho, 2021). A student-teacher relationship has been reported in many studies (Pennings & Hollenstein, 2020).

Teacher-student interaction is effective when there is mutual understanding between them (Yanzu Zhang, 2022). Mutual understanding is the result of trust and respect for each other. Teachers' openness to interact with students is independent of what they teach and how the lessons are delivered. Moment-to-moment teacher behavior is related to student perception of teachers' interpersonal style (Pennings & Hollenstein, 2020). A vital role of teachers in learners' lives is to provide a conducive learning environment that supports their learning needs. Educators must have a thorough knowledge of their learners and their needs (Nooruddin & Bhamani, 2019). Teachers with strong intercultural competencies are meant to support their students' learning effectively.

The benefits of cross-cultural interactions are documented (Bletscher & Hellmann, 2022). One of the responsibilities of teachers recruited through exchange visitor programs is to allow their learners to explore their home country. Teachers do an end-of-the-year presentation on their culture, costumes, dances, pictures of tourist places, fun facts, and so on (Ganley et al., 2019). International teachers are required to adjust their strategies and practices to accommodate their method of lesson delivery which might increase ways to meet learners' needs (Papadopoulou et al., 2022). Deed (2020) suggested that flexible learning allows teachers to collaborate and positively influence teacher-student relationships.

Mutual interaction between teachers is necessary for a smooth transition in the school (O'Brien & Battista, 2020). Beginning teachers seek support from expatriate teachers to understand the education system, utilize the available resources, and sometimes plan lessons that are feasible in the U.S. classroom. Possible obstacles teachers experience in adapting to the new

education system are changing established routines, difficulty in coping with the changes, working collaboratively, and teachers' self-determination to approach support (Deed, 2020). Teachers' knowledge of cultural diversity aids in responsiveness toward other teachers (Chuang et al., 2020).

Through diverging experiences, international teachers understand the culture as a complex entity (Sahling & De Carvalho, 2021). Moreover, the experience of culture shock and limited access to understanding the culture of the host schools deteriorate the rate of self-awareness in the teachers. Collaborating with host teachers supports the exchange of lesson plans, strategies, techniques, and ideas (Langdon et al., 2019). Learning from peers provides a clear understanding of the education system and helps in personal and professional experience (Ingersoll et al., 2019).

School Climate and Support

The climate of the school supports the well-being of all stakeholders (Lombardi et al., 2019). School environment directly impacts student achievement, teacher retention, attrition, and culture. Creating a safe school environment is one factor that students, teachers, and parents are concerned about (Crawford & Burns, 2020). International teachers are recruited by school leaders with less understanding of how they function (Chuang et al., 2020). There are differences between the U.S. education system and their home country's education system (Sahling & De Carvalho, 2021). International teachers' experience is an added knowledge of cultural diversity and virtuosity (Aslan, 2019). The need for continued support from superiors to handle student behaviors is still questionable (Hayes et al., 2020).

Aside from the cultural differences that international teachers experience, they have difficulty receiving support and guidance from host teachers (Kaur et al., 2021). Teachers with

high self-efficacy perform well by displaying better pedagogical practices (Özukul & Dönmez, 2023) and tend to understand the values of students and update the teaching and learning methods to meet the needs of the students (Karacabey et al., 2019). Leaders enhance intercultural climate by attending to the values and beliefs of the teachers and supporting them in the teaching and learning process. School culture is necessary to effectively function, provide safety for all (Crawford & Burns, 2020), and create a positive and healthy environment with equal opportunities for everyone to thrive for excellence (Crawford & Burns, 2020).

Professional Development

Teacher professional development helps to improve teaching and, thereby, improve educational outcomes (Perry, 2023). Due to an increase in international teacher placements in U.S. schools, there is a need for ongoing professional development requirements for novice teachers (Nooruddin & Bhamani, 2019) in content, classroom management, and instructional delivery. Ongoing professional development opportunities would help international teachers in job performance, classroom management skills, instructional strategies, and overall requirements of the U.S. schools (Mitchell et al. 2019).

Professional development for beginning teachers is not providing information in the induction program but offering it as a part of the teaching contract and embedded in a continuum approach (Caena, 2021). Teachers learn new ideas and methods that will help in designing their instructional modules. Perry (2023) explained that professional development enhances professional knowledge attitudes, and skills whereas professional learning is the outcome of the process.

Educational practices are successful when professional development opportunities help teachers transform from novices to experts (Karacabey et al., 2019). Teaching in unfamiliar

working conditions stresses the teachers making disoriented classroom settings that provide low performances (Kaur et al., 2021). Leaders need to prepare new teachers to face the challenges in the classroom by investing in ongoing professional development opportunities offered by expatriate teachers, coaches, or instructional coordinators in the school (Mitchell et al. 2019). Teacher learning has a positive influence on student achievement because teachers position themselves as active learners (Shakhsi Dastagahian & Scull, 2022).

Professional development is offered face-to-face or in a virtual setting. Teachers can enroll themselves in micro-credentials as well to meet their learning needs (Burrows et al., 2022). Teacher conferences, workshops, book studies, and other forms of professional learning equip teachers with instructional knowledge. International teachers must think of their teacher identity as an identity formation that is an integral part of professional development which helps to establish trust with their students by creating a safe environment (Sahling & De Carvalho, 2021).

Mentorship

School districts provide an induction program for beginning teachers to support teacher efficiency and effectiveness (Sutcher et al., 2019). School culture is influenced by leaders who implement plans and strategies for teacher development and student achievement (Crawford & Burns, 2020). With the increase in teacher shortage across the U.S., school districts, policymakers, and leaders have been working towards building capacity for teachers to support their self-efficacy (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). There is coordination at national, state, and local levels concerning policies and standards for induction and mentoring (Langdon et al., 2019).

Expatriate teachers are trained to be mentors by giving specialized instruction on the requirements of evaluation, classroom observations, and frequent checkpoints. Peer mentoring

builds empowerment and job readiness (Gower et al., 2022). International teachers could benefit from peer mentoring by receiving support and guidance from a teacher who teaches the same subject and is on the same grade level. It can also be another experienced international teacher. Mentoring influences teaching outcomes and in turn student learning outcomes (Alegado & Hnin Yu Soe, 2020). Teachers' instructional effectiveness improved when they received feedback from their mentors on the videotaped lesson (Ceballos, 2020).

Mentoring programs are provided in all schools to support new teachers, especially those youngsters coming straight out of college. They range in duration and intensity with meetings every month to provide support and develop high-quality teaching (Alegado & Hnin Yu Soe, 2020), curriculum-related strategies, and techniques. The mentor-mentee relationship provides exposure to new teaching skills and the exchange of innovative ideas, academic knowledge, and attitudes (Alegado & Hnin Yu Soe, 2020). Due to the influx of teacher migrations, novice teachers seek vacant positions. Teachers have minimum teaching experience and are challenged to start teaching on the first day of school. With no prior knowledge of the new classroom setting, they face difficulties in completing their duties. The availability of a sufficient number of mentors to support and guide novice teachers is necessary. Valuable insights are on international teachers who culturally adjust to the different educational systems with their own culture and practices (Ceballos, 2020).

Teacher Benefits

Teacher shortages in school districts across the U.S. have encouraged policymakers to make decisions to fill the vacant positions with international teachers (Hash, 2021). During the transition, teachers manage cultural adjustment to fit into the education system (Kaur et al., 2021). Educators benefit from teaching in unfamiliar settings by experiencing the culture of the

host community (Nulhakim et al., 2020). The evolution of technology in education has provided exposure to international teachers (Chuang et al., 2020).

Cross-cultural awareness improved instructional practices, teacher-student interaction, cultural awareness, exposure to the cultural background of students and host teachers, and linguistic development (Ospina & Medina, 2020). Ospina and Medina also stated that classrooms in the new education system have become a place of tolerance, patience, and cultural diversity. Professional development opportunities offered by schools align with individual needs and school improvement objectives (Perry, 2023).

The Gap in Literature

The review of the literature revealed the teacher shortages, recruitment of international teachers through recruitment agencies (Dalal et al., 2020), and their challenges in transitioning into the U.S. education system and implementing the curriculum. Teachers face challenges in U.S. classrooms to cooperate with the education system, policies, and procedures (Falcón, 2020). Experiences included classroom management challenges (Gaias et al., 2019), changes in their instructional practices, pedagogy, beliefs, and professional development to improve their practices and skills to match the needs of U.S. students (Kaur et al., 2021).

There are few studies conducted to understand the concerns of novice teachers (Cakmak et al., 2019). Ospina and Medina (2020) stated that the findings of teachers living and teaching internationally could not be generalized. Literature on hiring international teachers is relatively incipient (Mizzi, 2021). There are some studies on international teachers' perceptions and effects of teaching abroad. Ganley et al. (2019) suggested further research on the type of interaction that would be impactful between K–12 students and international teachers. Future research needs to explore the effects of situated learning experiences on novice teachers (Limin et al., 2021).

Papadopoulou et al. (2022) suggested that future studies must shed light on teachers' needs to become better prepared and trained to teach multicultural educational classrooms. Research on the lived experiences of international teachers using the U.S. curriculum is nonexistent.

Chapter Summary

Over the past few decades, teacher shortages have attracted attention, and unfilled positions are sought by foreign nationals. Having many years of teaching experience in their home country, international teachers come to the U.S. as novice teachers. Teachers' transitional experiences are explained in a few studies, but in-depth knowledge of the factors influencing the struggle is unknown. U.S. classrooms are increasingly becoming diverse and support global literacy and cultural responsiveness (Brandon et al., 2022). International teachers equip competencies, cultural awareness, and tolerance (Papadopoulou et al., 2022). School districts communicate with private recruitment agencies to fill vacant positions with highly qualified international teachers.

Foreign nationals aspire to seek jobs in the U.S. as an opportunity for personal and professional growth (Langdon et al., 2019). Student discipline problems and teacher turnover are relative to each other (Ingersoll et al., 2019). Educators' ongoing professional growth enhanced teacher retention, student learning, and achievement rates (Akiri & Dori, 2022). According to Aslan (2019), teacher shortages were replaced by teachers accepting diversification and cultural beliefs. The introduction of international teachers in U.S. schools strengthens multicultural education (Bybee et al., 2021).

Challenges identified in the review of literature provide evidence that international teachers face challenges when they seek opportunities in foreign countries. Attitudes, knowledge, and skills accepted by people to effectively communicate are stated in the intercultural

competency theory (Deardoff, 2006). The goal of the study was to explore the lived experiences of international teachers in U.S. classrooms with the U.S. curriculum. The results of the study will be helpful to international teachers aspiring to teach in U.S. schools. The subsequent Chapter 3 provides an overview of the research methodology.

Chapter 3: Methodology

A spike in international teacher recruitment in the U.S. allows teachers to bring cultural competencies to the U.S. classroom (Liz Zheng et al., 2022). The problem was international teachers accept offers to teach in the United States but face challenges for a smooth transition in the education system that affects students. Diversity in teacher beliefs, pedagogy, instructional strategies, and classroom management are challenges international teachers experience (Ospina & Medina, 2020).

Qualitative research provides in-depth insight into participants' beliefs and attitudes (Glover et al., 2020). The purpose of the qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of international teachers in U.S. classrooms in the education system. Phenomenological research helps to understand the lives of participants within a group context (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). These research questions guided the study:

Research Question 1: What lived experiences do international teachers identify as obstacles for a smooth transition in the U.S. education system?

Research Question 2: What social challenges do international teachers face that affect smooth transition in the U.S. education system?

Research Question 3: How does international teachers' pedagogical approach influence the expectations of the U.S. education system?

The methodology chapter includes sections on research methodology and design, the role of the researcher, research procedures, and the data instruments. Data collection and analysis are explained. Valid and reliable measures are considered. Ethical guidelines and procedures are discussed. Finally, the chapter summary captures relevant and significant points from the sections.

Research Methodology, Design, and Rationale

The need for this study was to explore the challenges international teachers experience during the transition to a new environment. Socioeconomic, cultural, and political factors may not influence how international teachers see how prior experience relates to current experience in the U.S. (Sahling & De Carvalho, 2021). The research used qualitative methodology and a transcendental phenomenological design to gain in-depth knowledge of the lived experiences, challenges, and perceptions of international teachers.

Methodology

The study used qualitative methodology. A qualitative phenomenological study targets the perceptions of participants by capturing their lived experiences (Bonyadi, 2023). Qualitative research adds new meaning to the already discovered themes through data collected from semi-structured interviews (Pedigo, 2019). This methodology supports the understanding of human experiences in the context of the education system in the U.S. The study aimed to identify the attitudes and beliefs in lived experiences (Glover et al., 2020). Qualitative research relates to diversity in perceptions and is used to collect rich data focused on experiences (Brooks et al., 2021).

Design

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), phenomenology helps to explore phenomena and describes individual experiences. Phenomenological research explores how and why individuals behave in a certain way (Farrukh & Usmani, 2023). The research focused on exploring the lived experiences of international teachers in U.S. classrooms. This qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was appropriate for exploring the commonalities of lived experiences

within a group of international teachers in an East Coast school district. A common design, case study is used to understand a deeper perspective systematically (Agrawal et al., 2022).

Transcendental phenomenology is a process of seeking to learn about participants' experiences with a phenomenon as it appears to them (Moustakas, 1994). An exploration of the lived experiences through the transcendental phenomenological study of international teachers offered insight into the challenges and obstacles during tenure in U.S. classrooms. The goal of the study was to describe the phenomenon rather than to analyze or interpret the phenomenon. This research identified specific categories, codes, and themes that emerged from the experiences of international teachers. Participants' affirmation of the emerged themes resonated with their lived experiences.

Role of the Researcher

I am an international teacher in the U.S. and have experienced the challenges like most other international teachers. My role in this study was to organize and carry out procedural steps and be successful in exploring the lived experience of participants in the study (Pietilä et al., 2020). Throughout this study, I explored the lived experiences of international teachers through participant voices (Moustakas, 1994). Epoché, also known as bracketing, is a process by which assumptions and biases are blocked out to explore the phenomenon as explained by participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Hence, this study conveyed a clear understanding of the phenomenon from the participants' experiences and perceptions that affect the smooth transition in the education system in the U.S. I bracketed my experiences while interviewing the participants, collecting the data, and analyzing them.

My relationship with the participants was only for study purposes. The purpose of interacting with the international teachers in the school district was to collect data on their lived

experiences in U.S. classrooms. I extended an invitation to participate in the study, provided an informed consent form conducted semi-structured interviews to collect the data, and analyzed the data by coding and finding themes to record the findings. The study complied with *The Belmont Report* (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979).

The informed consent and the information about the research study ensured compliance with the first principle of *The Belmont Report*. If there existed a conflict of interest during the study, participants were given the option to step away from the study (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). My job responsibilities did not interfere with conducting the study and collecting reliable and valid data. The participants were asked to only talk about the study and answer the research questions during the permitted time of face-to-face or virtual meetings.

Research Procedures

This research followed the procedure of a qualitative approach to answer the research questions. Semi-structured interview questions were used to gather in-depth data on the experiences of international teachers. Data collected were analyzed by coding and finding patterns and interpreted to draw findings.

Population and Sample Selection

International teachers presently teaching in an East Coast school district were the targeted population. The total population was approximately 160 international teachers serving in the school district. The countries of origin of these teachers were India, the Philippines, and Jamaica. American College of Education (ACE) required a minimum of 15 participants, and a desired sample of 17 participants was selected for the study. The sample used purposive sampling from a

recently consolidated district in an East Coast state. Criteria for purposive sampling (Ames et al., 2019) were teachers who earned a U.S. state teaching license with a minimum of 1 year of teaching in the school district serving at the research site. Selection of participants was done using the criteria and in the order in which the response to participate arrived. This process would have helped to select the desired number of participants had the number of qualified people been greater than 20. Permission to conduct the study received from the ombudsman stretched to the whole school district that has three regions. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data from participants.

Due to the diverse experiences and different characteristics, a purposive sampling technique was used. According to Ames et al. (2019), data can be collected from samples of participants with knowledge of the phenomenon. The study explored the lived experiences of international teachers and recruited participants with knowledge and understanding to answer the research questions.

Permission to conduct the study was requested from the school district's ombudsman using the ACE recruitment template (see Appendix A). The ombudsman's role in the organization is to explore and assist in determining options to help resolve conflicts, problematic issues, and concerns (Simont, 2021). After receiving the permission and ACE IRB approval, human resources and the principals of the schools in the East Coast school district were contacted. An email was sent to principals seeking permission to contact international teachers in their schools. The title of the study and information on the sample size was included in the email.

Recruiting and Informed Consent

After securing site permission (see Appendix B) and IRB (Friedman, 2022) approval, initial contact was made via district-assigned email addresses. First, the school district's human

resource department and principals of the research sites were contacted for a list of international teachers working under their supervision. Secondly, the international teachers were contacted using district email addresses individually to maintain confidentiality. The email included the recruitment invitation (see Appendix C) that identified the title of the study, participation criteria, voluntary participation, name of the researcher, contact information, and the informed consent form. Participants who responded and agreed to participate received a thank-you email and further steps to schedule a date to conduct the interview. A thank-you note was also sent to the teachers who did not qualify for the study. To follow ethical procedures, participants also received information on volunteering to participate (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979), the duration of the study, the risks and benefits of the study, the choice of conducting a face-to-face or virtual interview, and the mode of communication during the study.

The informed consent was sent electronically via email for participants to sign (see Appendix D). Participants were asked to retain a copy of all the communications and the signed consent form. During the study, all secured items including the signed consent forms were placed in a password-protected file in a password-enabled, personal laptop with limited access. Because emails can easily be hacked, all conversations and emails were downloaded and saved in a password-protected file. Paper copies and the password-enabled laptop were locked in a file cabinet in the home office. Each interview began with a review of the title of the study and the informed consent.

Instrumentation

The phenomenological design method incorporated in-depth, semi-structured interviews portraying the lived experiences of participants as international teachers. A researcher-developed

interview protocol was used to collect in-depth data from participants. An interview is a complex form of social interaction with beliefs, experiences, values, culture, class, language, ethnicity, and context (Coleman, 2019). Interviews are often conducted with people who share a similar lived experience of a phenomenon (Berner-Rodoreda et al., 2020).

Interview Protocol

The semi-structured interview protocol used pre-set questions with the flexibility to converse about the topic (Buys et al., 2022). Questions were aligned with the research questions that gathered in-depth information on the perceptions and experiences of international teachers in implementing the U.S. curriculum. Open-ended questions were used in designing the semi-structured interview. Adults with limited expressive language can provide informative responses to open-ended questions about their experiences (Bearman et al., 2021). The open-ended questions allowed participants to respond based on their complete knowledge and perceptions.

For this study, a semi-structured interview protocol guide allowed participants to share their perceptions of lived experiences in the U.S. education system. Interview questions were designed for participants to express their attitudes, beliefs, and challenges thoroughly (see Appendix E). The guide categorized questions based on the (a) purpose of becoming an international teacher, (b) benefits of working in a U.S. classroom, (c) specific challenges, (d) obstacles faced for a smooth transition in the U.S. education system, (e) social challenges that affected the smooth transition, and (f) pedagogical conflicts experienced. The interview questions were rephrased as needed based on teachers' comprehension.

Field Testing

Subject matter experts (SMEs), and academic professionals with in-depth understanding and knowledge of the subject (Anderson-Cook et al., 2019), reviewed the questions and gave

feedback and suggestions (see Appendix F). Experts requested to review questions had worked with international teachers as either supervisors or colleagues. One of the SMEs was a middle-level English teacher in the school district. The other SME was a high school math teacher who was also an international teacher. This SME was exempted from participating in the study. The third SME was an assistant principal in a middle school and worked closely with about 10 international teachers. Two of the three SMEs had a doctoral degree. Critical insight provided by the SMEs on the interview questions was taken into consideration. The research questions were the basis of the interview, and additional questions followed based on participant responses.

Reflexive notes were used to document conversations and observed behaviors from the participant's responses (Safronov et al., 2020). Notes were used to record events, behaviors, expressions of teachers while answering questions, and any characteristics that were observed during the interview. The interview took place face-to-face or virtual. The face-to-face interview was audio recorded and then transcribed after the meeting. In the case of virtual interviews, auto-generated transcripts were used to collect data. Interviews were conducted virtually using Microsoft Teams with permission to record and translate the conversation. Participants conducted member checking to verify transcription.

Data Collection

The data collection process took place in a month. This duration was required to interview 17 participants after school hours. A recruitment invitation with a copy of the informed consent was sent to all the international teachers working at the permitted research sites using the district-assigned email addresses. After receiving the responses, participants who met the criteria were contacted to explain the interview process, benefits and risks, and tentative dates to schedule the interview.

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted after working hours whether in a selected location for face-to-face or virtual interviews via Microsoft Teams at a scheduled time. Participants used guided, open-ended questions (see Appendix E) to express their thoughts, experiences, and perceptions (Ames et al., 2019). The interviews provided audio transcriptions to further the process of analysis.

Transcription is an essential process for data analysis (Parameswaran et al., 2020) and involves the careful depiction of data involving repeated listening (Corrente & Bourgeault, 2022). Live transcriptions were enabled during Microsoft (MS) Teams recordings. Face-to-face interviews were recorded using MS Teams to capture the conversation. Transcription using the Otter.ai software transformed the responses from face-to-face interviews into a text-based format. Otter.ai is a speech-to-text transcription program that records and reviews transcripts in real-time (Corrente & Bourgeault, 2022).

The study utilized reflexive notes (Safronov et al., 2020) to capture contextual information during the interview such as participants' activities, behaviors, and other observations. Translation of the in-depth descriptions from the reflexive notes was used for data analysis. Participants received a debrief of every step in the study process. All forms and documents were saved in a password-protected file. The informed consent forms, transcriptions, reflexive notes, and information collected from participants were locked in a password-protected file on a password-enabled laptop stored in a file cabinet located in the home office. Collected data will be stored for 3 years, and then paper records will be shredded and recycled. The password-protected file will be erased from the hard drive using a commercial software application, and the external drive used for the collection of data will be destroyed after 3 years.

Data Preparation

Data were carefully collected using transcripts from the recorded interviews and reflexive notes to preserve specific wordings and contexts shared by the participants. To capture statements verbatim, audio and video recordings were done upon participants' approval. Reflexive notes also provided rich descriptive details for data analysis (Safronov et al., 2020). Otter AI software was used to transcribe the recordings into texts (Corrente & Bourgeault, 2022). After member checking, the in-depth descriptions of the interview transcripts were examined, edited, and coded to identify themes and codes. Thematic map (Corrente & Bourgeault, 2022) helped organize keywords and key phrases to derive underlying themes. During the study, all participants' identities were kept confidential.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis is an approach used in qualitative research to characterize topics and summaries to capture the frequency of ideas, concepts, and meaningful expressions by participants (Ayre & McCaffery, 2022). Data were collected using open-ended interview questions and analysis was simplified using thematic analysis (Ayre & McCaffery, 2022). The six-step framework created by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used to complete the thematic analysis, as mentioned by Kiger & Varpio (2020).

The first step was to familiarize the data collected by repeatedly reading the responses of participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Generating initial codes based on the criteria after a review of responses using the transcripts of in-depth, open-ended interviews was the second step. The semi-structured interviews played a vital role because some probing questions were asked inclusive of the interview questions which led to a deeper understanding of coding. A code should be sufficiently well-defined and set apart clearly such that it does not overlap with other

codes (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Potential patterns or connections that led to themes were identified and documented on a spreadsheet.

Otter.ai software was used to transcribe the data. After the coding process, potential patterns or connections between items were noted that informed subsequent theme development (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Creating themes and subthemes from the identified codes was the third step. Thematic maps were used to compare concepts, themes, and subthemes and to organize themes to show interconnections.

In the fourth step, themes were reviewed to check for coherence in supporting the theme (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). The significance of the themes was determined and finalized with definitions and narrative descriptions (Braun & Clarke, 2006) in the fifth step. The final step included writing the analysis and findings based on the themes and descriptions.

Reliability and Validity

Interviews are one of the most widely used methods to collect data in qualitative research (Coleman, 2021). Johnson et al. (2020) stated that research should be trusted to be accepted and to make an impact on society. Transparency in reporting how the research was conducted is crucial (Haven et al., 2022). Trustworthiness strategies, such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were used to ensure the data were reliable and valid.

Credibility

Triangulation is one method that helps increase validity, reliability, and legitimation which encompasses credibility, dependability, confidentiality, and transparency of research findings (Moon, 2019). Triangulation was achieved by collecting and combining information from different sources (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Credibility refers to the appropriateness of the research. The information collected from the semi-structured interview ensured reliability and

validity. Data triangulation was achieved through the 17 diverse international teachers who shared their perceptions and lived experiences through interviews at different locations and times. Participants were diverse in different home countries, age groups, teaching experiences, and subjects taught.

The SMEs' suggestions on the interview questions were used. The process of member checking builds off qualitative research traditions of reimagining how member perspectives are integrated with qualitative work (Birt et al., 2016). Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data until data saturation was achieved (Guest et al., 2020). Data saturation is the point in a research process where enough data has been collected to conclude and additional information is not required.

Transferability

Transferability is the ability to generalize the research findings to a broader perspective or transfer to other settings such as a population or situations (Peterson, 2019). Using this study, generalization would occur when the same study can be applied in a different school district with a different population of international teachers. To increase transferability, plentiful descriptions and narratives were used so that the findings from the context in which the study was conducted could be applied to other surroundings (Yadav, 2022). The process of triangulation, debriefing, coding, documenting the findings, and explaining the data analysis addressed the threats to reliability and validity and improved transferability. Thick description was a way to recognize high-quality evidence and validate the findings from the study that could be applied to other international teachers teaching in other school districts in the U.S.

Dependability

Two strategies used to establish dependability were multiple sources and triangulation (Janis, 2022). Dependability was achieved when participants could view the transcripts for errors. Through purposive sampling, data were collected from international teachers hailing from different home countries, age groups, teaching experiences, and subjects taught. Data saturation is greatly influenced by dependability (Janis, 2022), and the number of participants for the study gave a large quantity of information on lived experiences in the U.S. education system. By bracketing the researcher's self-experiences, participants' views and perceptions will be made clear (Moustakas, 1994).

Confirmability

The inclusion of quotes or similar research data enhances the confirmability of the write-up of the findings (Yadav, 2022). Study findings were solely based on the data collected from the sources of participants' experiences reducing potential research bias. The data collected from the interviews were examined thoroughly, analyzed, and scrutinized to confirm the results.

Ethical Procedures

This study followed all the procedures and ethical guidelines as outlined in *The Belmont Report* (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). The first principle of *The Belmont Report* is respect for persons. Respect was demonstrated in multiple ways. Participants signed the informed consent form to participate voluntarily in the study. The informed consent (see Appendix D) included the title of the study and explanations of the purpose, research method and design, procedures, selection process, duration, participants' voluntary involvement, the process to withdraw from the study, risks and benefits of the study, confidentiality, and sharing the results. All confidential

information was secured in a password-protected file on a password-enabled, personal laptop locked in a file cabinet located in the home office. The data will be retained for 3 years and remain confidential. After 3 years, all paper copies of the data will be shredded and recycled. All electronic copies of the stored data will be erased from the hard drive and external drive. Electronic recordings of the interviews will be erased from hard drives, external devices, and cloud storage. The individual identities of participants will be kept confidential in any reports or publications.

The major goal of conducting the study ethically was to protect participants (Brothers et al., 2019). Participants were interviewed face-to-face or virtually at their convenience. Interviews took place outside working hours. The consent form explained how participants would be protected, and the integrity safeguarded as stipulated by the IRB. To protect participants, numbers were assigned instead of using names for identification in the research study.

The Belmont Report states beneficence as the second principle that relates to “do no harm” and maximize possible benefits and minimize risk (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). The informed consent form identified the risks and benefits of the study. Participants sharing confidential information about their personal lives might place themselves at risk if they are not protected. The benefit was that even though there was no financial benefit, the experiences shared by participants provided deeper knowledge about international teachers. The informed consent (see Appendix D) described how at any point during the study, the participants had the authority to withdraw from the study. The third principle of *The Belmont Report*, justice, pertains to fairness and equality. In this study, all international teachers in the school district had the opportunity to participate in the research. Participants and their schools will benefit from the study as an

additional resource to understand the lived experiences of international teachers in the United States.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of the qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of international teachers in U.S. classrooms in the education system.

Phenomenology was the best design because it helps to understand the lived experiences of participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This chapter documented the methodology, research design, instrument, procedures, researcher's role, data collection and analysis, reliability, and validity with strategies such as credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and ethical procedures.

Seventeen participants were purposefully selected to interview using the semi-structured interview protocol and questions. Reflexive notes were used to gather notes and analyze the data. Themes and patterns emerged from the coding process. Cautious steps were followed to respect and protect participants' privacy, confidentiality, and integrity. All ethical procedures contributed to the validity and reliability of the research.

In-depth descriptions collected from participants provided detailed results in Chapter 4. The qualitative phenomenological study's findings and emergent themes are presented. Codes, themes, and data analysis tools are included in the chapter.

Chapter 4: Research Findings and Data Analysis Results

International teachers are filling positions in the United States (U.S.) that have been vacant for prolonged periods. These vacancies occur due to native teachers leaving schools and/or the profession for various factors (Falcón, 2020). Some factors include teacher burnout and stress (Turner & Garvis, 2023). Jobs outside the teacher's native country impede the smooth transition and inability to exhibit full potential. International teachers seek job opportunities in the U.S. to discover culture, tradition, system, and self-efficacy (Martin & Mulvihill, 2019).

The problem was international teachers accept the offers to teach in the United States but face challenges for a smooth transition in the education system that affects students. The purpose of the qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of international teachers in U.S. classrooms in the education system. These challenges affect students.

Research Question 1: What lived experiences do international teachers identify as obstacles to a smooth transition in the U.S. education system?

Research Question 2: What social challenges do international teachers face that affect smooth transition in the U.S. education system?

Research Question 3: How does international teachers' pedagogical approach influence the expectations of the U.S. education system?

International teachers bring ample content knowledge and represent varied cultures, traditions, and heritage. The teachers take hold of the opportunity to excel in personal and professional growth, thereby exchanging culture and learning from the new environment (Langdon et al., 2019). The new environment also provides transitional challenges that may or may not be documented (Ospina & Medina, 2020). The lived experiences of international

teachers include transitional challenges, social challenges, academic and technological challenges, and teacher pedagogical approaches that influence the expectations of the U.S. education system. The following sections describe the data collection, data preparation, data analysis, findings/results, and reliability and validity.

Data Collection

The qualitative research method excels in capturing deep and detailed data from individual participants (Wallwey & Kajfez, 2023). Semi-structured interviews were used to collect qualitative data. Reflexive notes were used to document participants' conversations, observed expressions in answering the questions, and any other notable information during the interview (Safronov et al., 2020). The recruitment invitations (see Appendix C) and the informed consent form (see Appendix D) approved by the IRB were sent to 30 international teachers in the Western region using the district-assigned email addresses.

Seventeen teachers met the qualifications to participate in the study and agreed to participate. However, only 15 participants signed the informed consent forms. Two teachers were unable to participate due to personal circumstances. International teachers in the central region were contacted and the first two teachers to show interest signed the informed consent forms. By signing the informed consent, the participant autonomously grants permission and ensures the understanding of the research study, the process, risks, benefits, confidentiality, and the right to refuse or withdraw from the study (Lutomski et al., 2023).

The consent forms informed the purpose, research design and procedures, selection criteria, voluntary participation, duration of the interview, risks and benefits, and confidentiality. Sharing personal and confidential information during the interview was a risk (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research,

1979). The study will contribute to the existing literature and aid recruiters and future international educators. The informed consent form explained that participation was voluntary, and participants could end their participation at any time in the study.

The IRB approval signaled the beginning of the data collection process. Potential participants were contacted using district-assigned email addresses. Participants read the recruitment invitation and the informed consent form and decided to participate by signing and returning the consent forms. They began making contact during the following 2 weeks. The signed consent forms were returned via district-assigned email addresses. Upon receiving the informed consent forms, participants were given numbers P1, P2, and so on to P17 to preserve anonymity. Twelve percent (12%) of participants were from elementary school, 47% from middle school, and 41% from high school (see Table 1).

Table 1

Recruitment Data

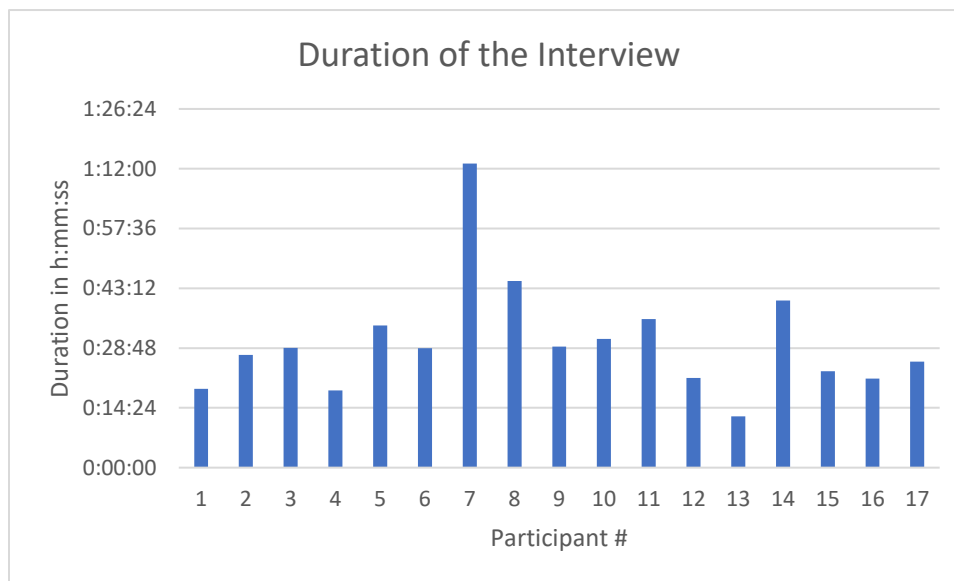
Level	Number and Percentage	Participants
Elementary	2 = 12%	P5, P6
Middle	8 = 47%	P3, P4, P7, P9, P10, P11, P14, P16
High School	7 = 41%	P1, P2, P8, P12, P13, P15, P17

Phenomenological research explores individual behaviors (Farrukh & Usmani, 2023) and focuses on exploring the phenomena and describing individual experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The semi-structured interview was used as a data collection instrument and reflexive notes were used to document information and conversations during the interview. Interviews

were conducted using MS Teams or face-to-face. The duration of the interviews ranged from 12 minutes to 1 hour and 14 minutes, as indicated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Duration of Interview by Participant



All participants permitted recording of the interviews via MS Teams, which took place within a month. The primary source of data came from the 17 interviews that included open-ended questions on lived experiences, social challenges, academic and technological challenges, pedagogical approaches, and recommendations (see Appendix E).

Data Preparation

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. The semi-structured interviews used pre-set, open-ended questions that participants had the flexibility to share their experiences (Buys et al., 2022). Upon participants' permission, all 17 interviews were audio recorded using MS Teams. The audio recordings, the transcripts, and the reflexive notes preserved specific wordings, contexts, common terms, and experiences shared by the

participants. Otter.ai software was used to transcribe face-to-face interviews into texts (Corrente & Bourgeault, 2022). After member checking, the descriptions for each open-ended question were examined, and participants' responses were organized in an Excel spreadsheet. Each sheet was devoted to sections from the interview protocol such as lived experiences, social challenges, academic and technological challenges, pedagogical approaches, and recommendations (see Appendix E).

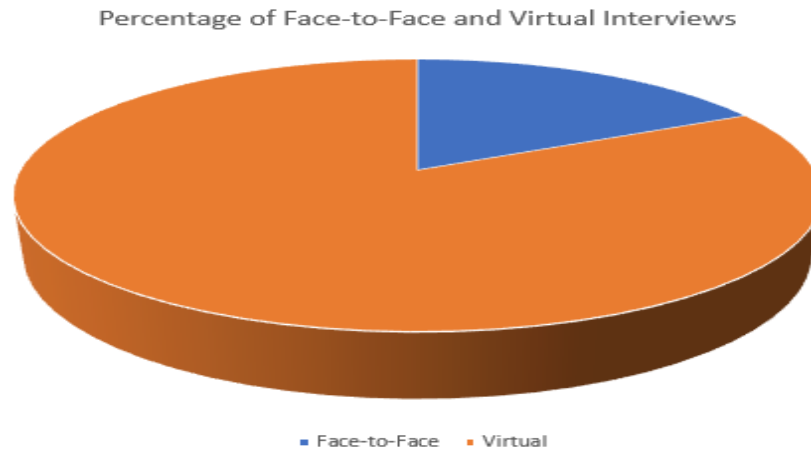
Data Analysis

Three participants agreed to face-to-face interviews and 14 participants joined the MS Teams meeting as in Figure 2. The pie chart listed below demonstrates that 82.4 % of the participants chose to meet virtually because the interviews were meant to be conducted after work hours, and most of participants wanted late afternoon schedules. They also mentioned that late afternoon hours were not only convenient but also allowed ample time to care for their family and be mentally prepared to talk after a busy workday.

All the interviews were recorded using MS Teams to capture live transcription. Otter.ai was also used in face-to-face interviews. Reflexive notes were used in both versions of the interviews to document participants' conversation, behavior, and expression when answering the semi-structured, open-ended questions on lived experiences, social challenges, educational and technological challenges, and pedagogical approaches.

Figure 2

Pie Chart of the Percentage of Face-to-Face and Virtual Interviews



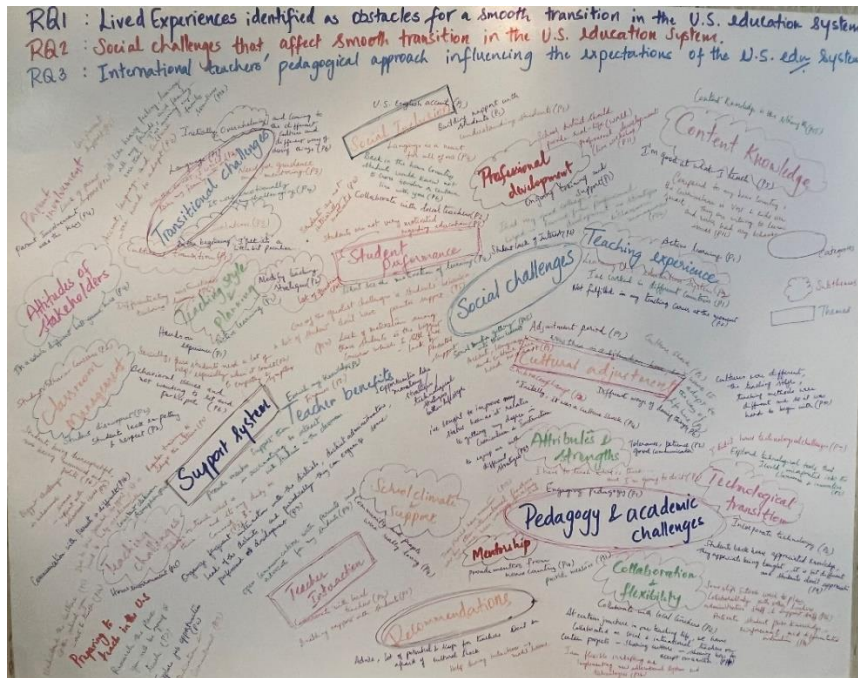
The data collected from the in-depth, semi-structured interviews, audio recordings, and reflexive notes were used to obtain analytic information. Data including the audio recordings, consent forms, transcripts, and reflexive notes were saved in a password-protected file. This password-protected file is on a personal laptop stored in a file cabinet in the home office. Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis was used to analyze the data to find codes and themes. The six-step model by Braun and Clarke was used to find themes and patterns in the data.

Thematic analysis began by familiarizing the data by repeatedly reading the responses of participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The responses were downloaded transcripts from the Microsoft Teams meetings, reflexive notes that documented participants' conversations, and listening to interview recordings. Hard copies of the transcripts were first read to eliminate grammatical errors, repetitive words, or interjections. Member checking was done to verify the transcripts by the participants before reviewing the transcripts for the second time. Highlighters and markers were used to identify keywords on lived experiences, social challenges, academic

and technological challenges, pedagogical approaches, suggestions, and support. These identifiers were based on the research questions.

Transcripts were read and annotated manually during coding, the second step of the thematic analysis. Excerpts from the transcripts used as quotes were also highlighted in color. Initial codes along with the excerpts were highlighted and bolded in the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet for further examination. The most common codes were adjustment period, embracing change, building rapport, behavioral issues, parent involvement, and teacher interaction. These codes were reoccurring concepts, keywords, and key phrases that represented patterns.

In the third step, patterns and connections in the codes led to emerging themes and subthemes documented in the spreadsheet. The themes gave a broader meaning to the shared information from participants. A thematic map as in Figure 3 was created comparing the themes and subthemes showing interconnection. Excerpts from the transcripts were also written under the emergent themes. Research questions were written on the top of the map to develop themes.

Figure 3*Thematic Map*

The fourth step was to review the themes to check for consistency and individualize them from other themes. Themes such as cultural transition and social isolation were initially general but were categorized under transitional challenges. About 16 subthemes emerged from the codes across the 17 transcripts but were rectified to fall under the four categories that were finalized.

Writing the analysis by making connections between the research questions and emerging themes was involved in the last two steps. The depiction of participants' experiences was written including the quotes. Results included the three categories and emerging themes that addressed each research question. The fourth category explained the support system that included suggestions and recommendations from international teachers to future educators and recruiters.

Findings/Results

Seventeen international teachers took part in a semi-structured interview out of which 3 participants participated face-to-face. The remaining participants chose to complete MS Teams interviews. Teachers in the East Coast district of the U.S. taught in elementary, middle, and high school. The highest percentage of participants were from high school. Data collected for analysis were transcripts, audio recordings, and documenting the conversations and behavioral expressions using reflexive notes.

Major Themes

The display in Figure 4 shows the four categories that outline the results of data analysis. Three sections address each research question, and the fourth section addresses the recommendations given by the participants to support future educators. The in-depth, semi-structured interview questions were divided into four categories, and those categories were used to select the emerging themes from the 14 subthemes. Categories that represent the themes are lived experiences, social challenges, pedagogy and academic challenges, and recommendations. The emerging themes that discuss the lived experiences of international teachers were cultural adjustment, social inclusion, student performance, teacher interaction, and support system.

Lived experiences of the participants offered subthemes such as transitional experiences, teaching experiences, choice to become an international teacher, and creating a place in the U.S. Social challenges included culture shock, adapting to the new environment, and social isolation. The pedagogical approach and academic challenges were combined due to the relationship of teaching experiences, attributes, strengths, and their effect on the students and the implementation of the curriculum. Recommendation from participants to the future non-native educators seeking jobs in the U.S. and the recruiters contributed to the final section.

Figure 4*Categories and Emerged Themes*

The categories and emergent themes reflected the lived experiences of international teachers in the U.S. A thorough analysis of the transcripts and reflexive notes resulted in detailed descriptions, a selection of excerpts, and direct quotes that explored the experiences of participants during and after the transition to the U.S. Participants' identities were kept confidential by assigning numbers. Semi-structured interviews related to three research questions were based on lived experiences, social challenges, and pedagogical approaches. The themes and

subthemes emerged from the coded transcripts that answered the research questions presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Emergent Themes by Research Questions

Research Questions	Subthemes	Themes
RQ1: What lived experiences do international teachers identify as obstacles for a smooth transition in the U.S. education system?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition • Overwhelming situations • Emotional challenge • Culture shock • Language 	Cultural adjustment
RQ2: What social challenges do international teachers face that affect smooth transition in the U.S. education system?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural Transition • Classroom management • Social Isolation 	Social inclusion
RQ3: How does international teachers' pedagogical approach influence the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching challenges • Understanding curriculum 	Student performance Teacher interaction

Research Questions	Subthemes	Themes
expectations of the U.S. education system?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technological transition • Modifying strategies • Transformational challenges • Attributes and strengths • Collaboration and flexibility • Teaching style and planning 	

Research Question 1 aimed to identify the obstacles international teachers experienced transitioning to the U.S. education system. An in-depth analysis revealed five subthemes that led to selecting a generalizing theme as cultural adjustment. Even though the participants expressed obstacles during the transition, the participants also mentioned that they adjusted have a smooth transition. Research Question 2 focused on the social challenges that affected the smooth transition in the U.S. education system. Three subthemes emerged from several codes that were highlighted in the transcripts. The subthemes were cultural transition, classroom management, and social isolation. These subthemes led to the theme of social inclusion.

Research Question 3 asked for international teachers' pedagogical approach to influencing the expectations of the U.S. education system. Eight subthemes were generated from codes resulting in two themes that answered the research question: (a) student performance and (b) teacher interaction. Teaching challenges, understanding curriculum, technological transition, modifying strategies, transformational challenges, attributes and strengths, collaboration and flexibility, and teaching style and planning were the eight subthemes. Responses of participants generated the fifth theme, the support system in the recommendation section of the semi-structured interview.

The research questions aimed to identify the obstacles during the transition, social challenges that affected the transition, and teachers' pedagogy and academic challenges during the transition. Four emergent themes included cultural adjustment, social inclusion, student performance, and teacher interaction. Participants also suggested recommendations to future educators and recruiters, which led to the last theme named support system. The support system included subthemes such as professional development and mentorship.

Cultural Adjustment

In-depth data analysis revealed the theme of cultural adjustment that aimed to acknowledge the first research question. International teachers are educators who seek job opportunities in different countries. Acculturation is a process of adjusting to new surroundings, cultures, and languages (Gündüz & Alakbarov, 2019). Participants gained ample content knowledge and experience in their home country before taking the teaching job in the U.S. The transition from their home country to the U.S. was a big step in adjusting to the new environment. Participant 16 expressed:

So, it's like really a heavy feeling leaving all my friends, and family over there and coming here. I feel like I'm missing my family sometimes. But if we frequently visit our home country, we can overcome that feeling.

Almost all the participants agreed that teaching in the U.S. would yield many benefits such as monetary, better lifestyle, and addition to the already existing wealth of knowledge.

Along with the benefits, there were some limitations in terms of settling down in a new environment and gathering necessities such as a place and transportation. Establishing from scratch was tedious as it took months to lead a normal life. Participants shared emotional challenges such as being far from family in the beginning and experiencing “culture shock”. Although transitioning into the U.S. classroom did not pose any challenges with teaching the content knowledge, the culture presented some unbelievable concerns. Participant 3 expressed:

One thing is the different place, the different people, the different culture, then the different classroom setup.

Social Inclusion

Social inclusion aims to answer the second research question. This related to participants' cultural transition in the new teaching environment and the classrooms. About 70% of the participants made comparisons to their native countries answering in-depth semi-structured interview questions about feelings, emotions, and social challenges that they may have faced during transition. Seeking social support can help feel less isolated, and improve the sense of belonging, and psychological adjustment (Alshammari et al., 2023). According to the participants, the inability to change or voice the necessity of a smooth transition was quite impossible in the beginning. Participant 2 called this “Embracing change” while Participant 3 said that “This is the situation here, so I have to adapt to the way of life here”. Almost all the

participants mentioned that these challenges were for a certain number of months until they could accommodate themselves well enough to survive the challenges. Prominently, Participant 4 said:

It's a whole different ball game here and the community and people were loving. I had to first establish a rapport with the students. I had open communication with the parents and I was an advocate for my students. I diligently worked on motivating my students to learn and taught them social skills to adapt and prioritize.

The most repetitive concern that arose in the classroom was classroom management. All 17 participants came from a teaching background where students were respectful and obedient. Disruptive student behavior is a significant challenge that decreases student performance and sometimes increases teacher burnout (Gunersel et al., 2023). Implementing the curriculum or the content was tough due to constant redirections and a disorganized classroom environment. Participant 5 mentioned a reason for the student behavior issues:

A lot of the students don't have parental support, so it's hard for me as a teacher to help the students.

Student Performance

The major academic challenge revealed during the semi-structured interviews was insouciance towards learning. This theme is related to the third research question of international teachers' pedagogy and influence on the U.S. education system. Participants used terms such as no motivation, carefree, reluctant to learn, and adamant due to deficient skills. Almost all participants noted that there is pressure in the education system to ensure all students pass and are promoted even though they lack foundational skills. As a result, students receive a passing grade or overall grade of no less than 50. Participant 8 described students' reluctance to learn:

Students are not very motivated regarding education.

Lesson planning is a core and essential component of teacher education and cannot be learned intuitively or solely through classroom experience (Koberstein-Schwarz & Meisert, 2024). When asked about lesson planning and delivery of lessons, participants remarked that successful content delivery depended on the classroom environment and students' participation. Interruptions and disruptions led to a loss of instructional time. Participant 9 made a comparative statement:

It's still different because students back home, appreciate knowledge, they appreciate being taught because they know it's hard. Here in the US, it's a bit different because I think that students would have gotten the opportunity to lessons, and at times they don't appreciate it because of course things are given to them.

Teacher Interaction

Teacher interaction is also a theme that emerged to answer Research Question 3. Through interactions, teachers are exposed to profound knowledge, information, and resources from their surroundings, which impact their pedagogy. Teacher behavior leads to students' understanding of the concept while students' behavior produces pertinent responses to teachers (Yanzhu Zhang, 2022).

All the participants who had no experience teaching in international schools had greater challenges in the initial years and were anxious about classroom arrangement, interaction with their students and native teachers, expanding interpersonal skills, and communicating in an American accent. Participants have made every effort to collaborate with native teachers and

expatriate international teachers. When asked about the effort teachers took to collaborate with the host teachers, Participant 14 said:

At certain junctures in our teaching experience, we have collaborated as local and international teachers on certain projects where we are deliberately trying to get everybody to be aware of somebody else's culture and also trying to get the students to accept other people for who they are and to accept the fact that there are different cultures.

Interaction with students in the participants' home country is easier compared to the U.S. At least 80% of the participants expressed their challenges in understanding the culture, student background, and learning style. Initiatives taken to understand the U.S. curriculum were noted by Participant 6.

Getting my degree in curriculum and instruction that, equips me with different strategies or ways of reaching the students.

Support System

First-year teachers are offered an induction program that offers training in classroom management, the teacher evaluation process, and some instructional strategies. When asked about recommendations for future international teachers and recruiters, 85% of the participants pointed to ongoing professional development opportunities. Participant 11 stated that school districts should provide real-world professional development where it can be a live workshop by subjects and not listening to a lecture under one roof. Unfamiliar situations can lead to disoriented teaching and a chaotic learning environment. In addition to the program, participants

concurred that they received support from native colleagues and administrators. Participant 12 stated the importance of professional development as:

I must appreciate these American teachers and administrators. I had very good colleagues throughout, and they helped not only me but all other international teachers who were working with me (during the time) when I was new to the U.S. system. I followed the successful colleagues who worked with me and also, and I learned from professional development sessions for everything, everything I meant to say like classroom management and strategies and all.

School districts assign experienced teachers as mentors to support their peers. Participant 6 shared that she was blessed to have a mentor teacher who was able to talk to her, provide suggestions, understand challenges, and help her throughout the year by giving tips and strategies to overcome the challenges. Peer mentors influence positive outcomes that benefit teachers. However, participants suggested the possibility of having an experienced international mentor as an added advantage. Participant 10 said:

Providing them international mentors would help them and support them very well compared to having an American mentor.

Answering the Research Questions

The responses from semi-structured interviews answered the three research questions. The lived experiences of international teachers revealed transitional challenges such as culture shock, overwhelming situations, and emotional challenges. Teachers had difficulties in rendering responsibilities and duties and serving the needs of students due to cultural differences and unfamiliar situations during the first few years of teaching in the United States. International

teachers felt a need for support during the transition through settling down in the new environment and acclimating to the culturally different students, parents, and colleagues. Classroom management was a major challenge that all participants faced at different levels. The challenges were different for each participant because some of them had prior experience in another non-native country before coming to the U.S. Continuous practice, understanding students and their backgrounds, and social inclusion helped to slowly adjust to the cultural transition. The community, administration, district personnel, and American teachers were supportive of embracing the change. Students' attitudes tend to be disrespectful, lack empathy, unwilling to listen, low levels of motivation and not to take responsibility for their behavior (Kırkıç & Yahşi, 2021). These unjust factors deteriorated the smooth transition in the U.S. education system. International teachers' pedagogy included teaching skills and methods, flexibility, collaboration, and connecting the new education system.

The expectations in the classrooms as compared to their home country and the U.S. were almost the same. The external duties such as classroom management and behavior management systems were new. Teachers were flexible in accommodating the needs of the U.S. classroom, such as differentiating instruction, tailoring lessons to meet the needs of the students, modifying teaching strategies, and participating actively in learning new academic and technological strategies. Table 3 illustrates examples of quotes from the participants along with the emerging themes.

Table 3*Themes and Quotes from Participants*

Themes	Quotes From Participants
Cultural Adjustment	<p>“It was very overwhelming and you know, coming here and having a totally different culture and totally different way of doing things and all of that... [and] But as the years went by, then, you know, I had to make the necessary adjustments and, you know, change my mindset and that kind of a stuff” (Participant 6).</p> <p>“So of course, the cultures were different, the teaching style, teaching methods were different and so it was hard to begin with” (Participant 10).</p>
Social Inclusion	<p>“The biggest challenge is behavioral issues like students are very upfront with behavioral issues” (Participant 5).</p> <p>“Well, socially, these children need a lot of help, especially when it comes on to empathy and sympathy” (Participant 2).</p>
Student Performance	<p>“So, lack of motivation among these students is the biggest concern which I still face and another one is a lack of parental support” (Participant 12).</p> <p>“To compare with my home country the curriculum is vast and kids are very smart. They are willing to learn and never had any behavior issues in my home country” (Participant 11).</p>

Themes	Quotes From Participants
Teacher Interaction	<p>“Building rapport with students and understanding them” (Participant 1).</p> <p>“Some steps I took were I tried to plan collaboratively with other teachers, administrative staff, and support staff” (Participant 16).</p>
Support System	<p>“Provide mentors (from home country). Support them in acclimatizing to interacting with students in the classroom, help them with training in understanding the expectations of the school/district” (Participant 4).</p> <p>“The suggestion from my side to the recruiting districts means they can organize some frequent interactions with the districts, district administrators, the heads of the districts, and periodically they can organize some professional development courses” (Participant 3).</p>

Reliability and Validity

The semi-structured interview was used to collect data in a trusted environment (Johnson et al., 2020). Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were used to ensure that the data were trustworthy, reliable, and valid. The research questions were answered through the international teacher participants’ precise word-to-word narratives and events.

Credibility

Analysis of the data involved collecting and organizing the transcripts, recordings, and reflexive notes by participant numbers. Methods such as triangulation, member checking, epoché, and well-explained descriptions established the credibility of the research. The suggestions from the subject matter experts (SMEs) were implemented in writing the questions. Seventeen semi-structured interviews achieved data saturation. Conversations and observed behaviors of participants were written down in the reflexive notes. Experiences and perceptions were collected from the participants through transcripts, recordings, and reflexive notes combined to produce codes and themes that were done manually. The categories helped answer the three research questions. Research credibility was ensured by identifying, explaining, and describing codes, categories, and themes from the transcripts.

Transferability

The study findings would be transferred by conducting the same study in a different school district with a population of international teachers. Rich descriptions, annotations, and narratives increased transferability to other school districts. To address the threats, triangulation, debriefing, coding, and documenting the findings were followed and the process of data analysis itself improved the transferability. Rich and precise descriptions from participants recognized high-quality evidence of the lived experiences of international teachers in implementing the U.S. curriculum that may be extended to other school districts in the U.S.

Dependability

Multiple resources such as transcripts, recordings, and reflexive notes were used to establish dependability. Participants were allowed to review the transcripts for any errors. Participant recruitment was achieved by purposive sampling that gave various experiences from

different home countries, age groups, teaching experiences, and subject areas. Seventeen participants who were interviewed contributed an abundant amount of information on lived experiences in the U.S. education system. Bracketing prevented assumptions and bias in the study.

Confirmability

Categories were created to answer the research questions and led to finding the codes and themes. Themes were explicitly explained using the inclusion of quotes and descriptions from the participants. Research bias was reduced and included findings that were consistently depicted from the participants' experiences. The data collected from the semi-structured interviews were thoroughly inspected and scrutinized to confirm the results.

Chapter Summary

The study on international teachers' lived experiences in the U.S. and the implementation of the curriculum made a remarkable offering to the already existing literature and research. Exploring lived experiences was supported by three research questions. The research questions focused on the identified obstacles to a smooth transition, the social challenges encountered, and the teachers' pedagogical approaches influencing the expectations of the U.S. education system. Seventeen participants' experiences led to the analysis of qualitative data. Purposive sampling was used by selecting participants who earned a state teaching license in the U.S. with a minimum of 1 year of teaching in the school district serving at the research site.

Data was analyzed using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet by highlighting the codes, subthemes, and emerging themes and categories. Categories were transitional challenges, social challenges, pedagogy and academic challenges, and recommendations. Transitional challenges include a theme of cultural adjustment, social challenges emerged a theme called social

inclusion, and pedagogy and academic challenges emerged two themes of student performance and teacher interaction, and recommendations included a theme support system. Reliability and validity were ensured by credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

The analysis of data recognized the categories and themes presented findings regarding transition, overwhelming situations, emotional challenges, culture shock, and language.

International teachers also informed the cultural transition, classroom management issues, social isolation, and attitudes of stakeholders towards them in the interviews. The workplace required them to experience teaching challenges, understand the curriculum, modify strategies, transformational challenges, attributes, strengths, collaboration, flexibility, teaching style, and planning. The gap in the literature showed the existence of a study on the international teachers' perceptions and not how they implement the curriculum. Chapter 5 will provide findings, interpretations, conclusions, and future recommendations.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions

International teachers seek opportunities to work in the United States for personal and professional growth. Along with such opportunities come challenges that need to be addressed. The problem was international teachers accept offers to teach in the United States but face challenges for a smooth transition in the education system that affects students. The purpose of the qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of international teachers in U.S. classrooms in the education system. Data were gathered through a semi-structured, in-depth, open-ended interview protocol that provided strong descriptions narrated by 17 international teachers in an East Coast school district.

All interview questions targeted identifying the lived experiences, social and educational challenges, and pedagogical approaches of international teachers who earned a U.S. state teaching license with a minimum of 1 year of teaching in the East Coast school district serving as the research site. Interview questions aligned with the following research questions:

Research Question 1: What lived experiences do international teachers identify as obstacles to a smooth transition in the U.S. education system?

Research Question 2: What social challenges do international teachers face that affect smooth transition in the U.S. education system?

Research Question 3: How does international teachers' pedagogical approach influence the expectations of the U.S. education system?

Thematic analysis of participants' experiences resulted in descriptive narration and 16 subthemes grouped into four categories (a) transitional challenges, (b) social challenges, (c) pedagogy and academic challenges, and (d) recommendations. The categories were collapsed into five major themes: (a) cultural adjustment, (b) social inclusion, (c) student performance, (d)

teacher interactions, and (e) support system. The first three categories and first four themes addressed the research questions, and the last category and theme addressed recommendations related to the support system for international teachers (see Figure 4). The phenomenological study's findings, interpretations, and conclusions with the limitations and recommendations for policymakers, educators, recruiters, and academics are discussed in the following sections.

Findings, Interpretations, and Conclusions

While existing literature was available on teacher perceptions, the review in Chapter 2 revealed a gap that required exploration of the lived experiences of international teachers in implementing curriculum in the U.S. An understanding of teacher beliefs and their influence in the classrooms needs to be explored (Dos Santos, 2019). Analysis of the 17 participant transcripts revealed five themes that explained the lived experiences, challenges, and pedagogical approaches of international teachers and provided support for this study's recommendations. Table 2 identified the 16 subthemes that emerged from the codes across the 17 semi-structured interviews. These findings reflected the need for more research on cultural transition, classroom management, understanding the U.S. curriculum, modifying strategies, teaching style, and planning which emphasized the area of curriculum implementation.

The five major themes aligned with the three research questions and the study's recommendations. The alignment was: Research Question 1, cultural adjustment; Research Question 2, social inclusion; Research Question 3, student performance and teacher interaction; and Research Questions 1–3 recommendations, support system. Participants shared how the U.S. curriculum is challenging, structured, and lacking in implementation flexibility. Transitional challenges such as adjusting to the unfamiliar cultural and communication gaps were present in existing literature but not in the context of implementing the curriculum. Deardoff's (2006)

intercultural competency theory and Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning theory were the guiding theoretical framework of the study. Findings are described in the next sections by research questions, literature review, and theoretical framework.

Findings Related to Research Question 1

Research Question 1 addressed the lived experiences of international teachers in a smooth transition in the U.S. education system. All participants agreed that entering the U.S. for jobs was to seek cross-cultural experience, salary benefits, and exposure to a better lifestyle. Kissau et al. (2019) mentioned cross-cultural experience as a motivation for international teachers pursuing careers in other countries. Transitional challenges emerged supporting cultural adjustment as the major theme aligned with this research question. Although participants taught at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, the transitional challenges shared by all of them had similarities.

Transitioning from their home country to the U.S. was a significant decision that brought promising factors of personal and professional growth. Participants expressed differences in place, people, culture, and classroom setup. Data revealed participants' experience in unfamiliar environments in the initial teaching years made it difficult to interact with students and colleagues. Existing research mentioned poor interaction in unfamiliar settings (Sahling & De Carvalho, 2021). Participants expressed culture shock as one of the major challenges in the U.S. classroom. Literature indicated that culture shock plays a major role in teachers making decisions to quit their jobs which is impacted by job satisfaction (Kaur et al., 2021). According to international teachers, culture shock is in the form of student perception of learning, being muted, rejection from expressing concerns, and sometimes underestimation. Hurdles in communication with students, colleagues, and parents were described as difficult during the transitional period.

Moving from their comfort zones was the participants' first step in acquiring their dream job that assured growth, a new lifestyle, and cultural competency. Cross-national experiences included new advancements, culture shock, unfamiliar work environments, differences in doing things, and problems with teacher-student relationships (Ospina & Medina, 2020). Teachers described this navigation as uneasy and filled with anxiety and fear. Literature also supports the idea that such emotional challenges contribute to negative outcomes for teachers (Kaur et al., 2021). Data described experiences that help international teachers overcome challenges as they continuously search for answers to perpetual classroom problems. International teachers acknowledge they make cultural adjustments as they experience challenges, but research findings confirmed that beginning teachers need support to build confidence in their capabilities and give thoughts to their beliefs (O'Brien & Battista, 2020).

Findings Related to Research Question 2

The study explored the social challenges faced by international teachers that affect the smooth transition into the U.S. education system, as addressed by Research Question 2. Social inclusion emerged as the major theme for the category of social challenges and Research Question 2. Subthemes included cultural transition, classroom management, and social isolation. Cultural experiences of international teachers explained poor interaction with students due to unclear teaching requirements and learning needs. This disconnect happens when there is a clash between two cultures, and neither person knows nor understands the culture of the other.

All participants referred to classroom management as a major challenge. Findings supported that student discipline was more effective in the participants' home country compared to the U.S. Literature stated that challenges with student discipline prevent progress and foster burnout (Dos Santos, 2019). Teacher participants described students' behavior as disrespectful,

undesirable, impolite, mannerless, and without empathy. International teachers spend less time teaching effectively due to challenges addressing inappropriate student behavior (Gaias et al., 2019). Literature also identified the risk to teacher self-efficacy due to teachers managing students' improper behavior (Ingersoll et al., 2019).

Social inclusion within the new environment comprises challenges such as planning to face obstacles, managing student behavior and teaching, and mentally and physically preparing for adverse situations. Participant 3 noted “embracing change,” and Participant 4 called it a “ball game.” About 13% of lesson time is wasted managing student behaviors in 23 countries reported in a study by Hayes et al. (2020). Data indicated that even though the initial years were tough controlling the classroom for most participants, their experiences trying to understand students' culture and attitude toward learning helped to minimize the loss of instructional time.

Findings Related to Research Question 3

Research Question 3 addressed international teachers' pedagogical approach to influencing the expectations of the U.S. education system. Student performance and teacher interaction emerged as the two themes from this research question. Participants who were experienced international teachers working with different age groups of students noted a major academic challenge in U.S. classrooms as indifference toward learning. The literature states that international teachers invest much knowledge and experience in teaching by applying strategies and methodologies (Aslan, 2019). Participants noted the investment in their experience in the U.S. made them culturally aware to practice and apply the skills to be successful in their classrooms. With low autonomy and high demand for social promotion, participants questioned the lack of foundational skills that students need to attain to reach their career goals. About 70%

of participants identified a combination of low self-motivation and reluctance to learn producing low student performance.

The second theme of Research Question 3 was teacher interaction. Although all participants agreed they had a good rapport with colleagues and made efforts to collaborate with native teachers, there was much to explore and learn to connect with students. Interaction with peers provides a good understanding of the system (Ingersoll et al., 2019). Effective teacher-student interaction is dependent on mutual understanding (Yanzu Zhang, 2022). Participants reported differences in how students respond to native teachers and international teachers indicating a lack of cultural awareness.

Findings suggested international teachers implement the strategies and techniques provided in the school and adjust their pedagogical beliefs, strategies, and methods of lesson delivery. The literature highlighted the adaptations international teachers make to accommodate the expectations of the U.S. education system (Deed, 2020). Literature suggests there is a need to understand the teacher's experiences to promote positive outcomes (Jamil et al., 2022). Data identified the teachers' initiative to try different methods, modify their strategies, and accept transformational challenges to understand the curriculum.

Attributes and strengths that participants owned helped make transformational changes to their pedagogical approach to influence the expectations of the U.S. classroom. Effective teaching includes teachers' skills and content delivery that increases student learning (Tamir, 2021). Attributes shared by the participants were confidence, content knowledge, passion, building relationships, and flexibility in adapting and implementing new educational systems and technologies.

Support From the Theoretical Framework

Deardoff's (2006) intercultural competency theory and Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning theory guided the theoretical framework of the study. According to intercultural competency theory, attitudes, knowledge, and skills help individuals effectively communicate with other cultural backgrounds. The theory is associated with intercultural participation during cultural exchanges (Kalčić, 2021). Situated learning theory assumes that everyone is unique in and of themselves (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Such an environment sets the stage for opportunities to collaborate, exchange skills, reflect, and engage in real-life ideas.

As a part of the theoretical framework, intercultural competency theory supported the study. All participants developed an openness to create a culture of inclusion and said they understood the differences required to transform in diverse classrooms. Participants shared the willingness to connect and enrich the cultural exchange. Research Question 3 identified the attitudes, strengths, flexibility, and transformational ideas that participants acquired to overcome challenges and effectively communicate with U.S. teachers and students. Findings showed that participants gained opportunities to interact with students, peers, resources, and technology through years of experience in the U.S. The transition of international teachers from their native country to the U.S. was supported and promoted by the intercultural competency theory.

Regardless of the challenges during the beginning years in the U.S., participants expressed the ability to engage with their colleagues and students through years of experience. Applying the intercultural competency theory to international teachers who were part of the cultural exchanges showed interest in students to know the culture. Participants indicated support from the administration and peers who respected and understood the cultural disparity. Papadopoulou et al. (2022) stated that learners of the 21st century in a diverse classroom require

teachers with high qualifications, competencies in skills, flexibility, lesson delivery, and attitudes of tolerance which are aptly found in international teachers. Data revealed exclusive information on international teachers' willingness to become proactive in the effective implementation of the U.S. curriculum.

As the second part of the theoretical framework, situated learning theory was relevant to the study. Participants stated that their individuality was respected, and the knowledge acquired through active participation in the schools helped them to plan and execute lessons as expected. These learnings were real-life examples of facing the challenges of establishing individuality in a U.S. classroom. Students learn differently from the experiences of culturally different identities and backgrounds. All participants expressed building positive relationships gradually with students to progress in learning.

The situated learning theory helped to understand the importance of relationships and interactions between international teachers and native U.S. teachers for support (O'Brien & Battista, 2020). Participants indicated they interchanged their culture, methodologies, skills, strategies, techniques, and interests, and gave wider exposure to the world outside the U.S. The theory supported the exploration of the lived experiences of international teachers in implementing the U.S. curriculum.

Limitations

Documenting international teacher participants' lived experiences contributed to the existing research on challenges encountered in U.S. classrooms. Data were collected by interviewing 17 international teachers, on Microsoft Teams or face-to-face using a semi-structured interview protocol. Findings were reliable as participants were informed of the transparency by including informed consent, semi-structured interview questions, and virtual and

face-to-face interviews. Data were captured from audio recordings, transcripts, and notes on approval from participants, making the data dependable. Transcripts were sent to participants for member checking, making confirmability achievable.

The limitations related to the study were reliance on a small participant sample and a single research site. About 160 international teachers served in the recently consolidated school district. The recruitment invitation was sent to 30 international teachers working in the Western region of the school district situated on the East Coast of the U.S., and 17 teachers participated in the study. Because of the small sample size in a single district, the findings of a study on the lived experiences of international teachers may not be generalizable. Lived experiences shared by international teacher participants may not be transferred to other districts unless international teacher demographics are like the East Coast district. Teachers may encounter different transitional challenges and social challenges, and their approach may influence the expectations differently. Future research may focus on studying the lived experiences of districts with the same or different contexts.

Recommendations

Global teaching opportunities affect positive teaching skills and help prepare teachers' cultural competencies (Mizzi, 2021). Teachers across the world seek job opportunities in the U.S. for personal and professional growth. Shortages increase the number of international teachers placed in vacant positions to reduce staffing challenges in U.S. school districts. During the transition, international teachers encounter an understanding of the new education system and the challenges faced in implementing the curriculum. Recommendations should be directed to improve the system and international teachers' experiences in U.S. classrooms.

Recommendations, emerging from the fifth major theme of support system, for practitioners, policymakers, and researchers are included in the next sections.

Professional Development

Teaching and learning processes improve outcomes through teacher professional development (Perry, 2023). The increase in international teachers in the U.S. calls for ongoing professional development requirements to serve 21st-century learners. School districts offer induction programs for new teachers to explain policies, resources, standards, and strategies throughout the year (Mitchell et al., 2019). Policymakers should offer this program as a part of the teaching contract and embed it as a continuum perspective. International teachers face challenges in unfamiliar working conditions as a result of low performance. School leaders and practitioners should prepare international teachers by investing in ongoing professional development to ensure continuous assistance in areas such as classroom management, instructional planning, and lesson delivery.

Mentorship

School districts offer induction programs for new teachers to explain policies and provide resources and training to begin teaching. School leaders execute plans and strategies for teacher development and student engagement creating school culture (Crawford & Burns, 2020). Increasing teacher shortages and international teacher recruitment have enlightened school districts, policymakers, and leaders working toward building capacity for teachers to support self-confidence (Garcia & Weiss, 2019).

Experienced teachers should serve as mentors for teachers undergoing induction programs. Mentors support new teachers inside and outside the classroom, evaluating, observing lessons, and frequently checking for requirements. Teachers' instructional outcomes improve

when they receive constant feedback from mentors (Ceballos, 2020). The recommendation is to assign mentors who are experienced international teachers in the school district. Challenges faced by experienced international teachers should be a guiding light for new international teachers. Their lived experiences, transitional phases, accomplishments, adjusted strategies, and techniques should help new international teachers have a smoother transition to U.S. culture.

Implications for Leadership

The study explored the lived experiences of international teachers in implementing the U.S. curriculum. Findings indicated implications for recruiters and international teachers. International teachers are competent, dedicated, hardworking individuals who contribute to the U.S. education system to improve student achievement (Cherng & Davis, 2019). Educational leaders invest in individuals who dedicate themselves to personal and professional growth and selflessly play a part in social outcomes in the school (Tamir, 2021). Applying the implications, leaders across the school, district, state, and nation who represent the decision-makers should have access to the findings of such a study.

This study informs decision-makers that the recruitment of international teachers should not be considered only as placement for teacher shortages. Moreover, recruitment programs should enforce robust, comprehensive support from the initial stages of international teachers' arrival in the U.S. until they independently navigate the U.S. education system. This program may prepare international teachers for transition, intercultural exchange, and learning the new education system. Acquiring such understanding may reduce transitional and social challenges.

School districts should develop, implement, and sustain effective mentoring programs to provide ample information on instructional practices, resources, and training on integrating technology, maneuvering specialized school sites like PowerSchool, and using learning

management systems. These programs may support international teachers who are mentored by experienced international teachers working in the district. Guidance from mentors provides exposure to new skills and techniques and opportunities to exchange personal experiences, attitudes, and learning experiences (Alegado & Hnin Yu Soe, 2020). Teachers from other countries seeking jobs in the U.S. should research the culture, education system, transition, and time needed to lead a normal life.

Conclusion

The rise in international teacher recruitment due to teacher shortages has made a meaningful impact on the exchange of culture and diversity resulting in personal and professional growth (Langdon et al., 2019). Teachers entering the U.S. bring immense content knowledge and ethnic exchange entities to share with peers, students, and the community. This growth allows international teachers to experience a new culture, acquire new knowledge, and adjust to the new environment (Cakmak et al., 2019). The experience allows international teachers to adjust their pedagogical approach to influence the expectations of the U.S. education system.

Participants acknowledged cultural differences in U.S. classrooms offered overwhelming challenges that induced anxiety and fear to some extent. Using the curriculum as directed by superiors gave fewer options to implement the teaching methods that international teachers practiced successfully in their home countries. Participants shared lived experiences that dealt with challenges during the initial years in U.S. classrooms, noting a gradual improvement in their experience over time.

International teacher participants experienced technologically induced teaching practices and new ideas along with accommodation to the new lifestyle (Cakmak et al., 2019). Adapting to

U.S. classroom cultures exposed differences in student discipline and characterized the need for proper communication and positive relationships (Ganley et al., 2019). Transformative approaches were successful in implementing the U.S. curriculum, thereby ensuring the implementation of a combination of two cultural methods to produce student outcomes.

Experiences are built upon the strengths to overcome opposition and to create favorable outcomes (Papadopoulou et al., 2022). The content knowledge and passion for teaching possessed by international teachers support the need for school districts to retain them. International teachers' strong, intercultural competencies and openness to interact with students enable them to be successful in supporting the education system and the community. The results of the study may be useful to aspiring, future international educators, providing sufficient knowledge of the opportunities and learning curves in U.S. classrooms.

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Appendix A

Permission Request

From: Kavitha Rathinam
Sent: Monday, March 20, 2023 9:29 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Dissertation study (International teachers and US curriculum)

Greetings!

I am writing to ask for your assistance. I am trying to conduct and complete Ed.D dissertation research. I am going to begin Chapter 3 Methodology in two weeks from now. With your permission, I would like the opportunity to study the perceptions of international teachers in the district in implementing the U.S. curriculum. The district name or the name of participants will not be used in this study and will remain anonymous. Being an international teacher, I am passionate about understanding the transitional experiences of international teachers in implementing the U.S. curriculum. This study certainly will be beneficial to future international educators planning to serve in the district. In order to complete the study, I will need permission to contact international teachers in the school district. More information on the criteria of sampling will be shared if required.

With your permission, I feel this study would be beneficial to the human resource department and the international educators in the district. I can share more information with you if needed after my chapter 3 course begins.

Thank you for your assistance

Kavitha Rathinam

Appendix B**Permission Letter**

November 15, 2023

Kavitha Rathinam
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dear Ms. Rathinam,

This letter is written to grant permission for you to conduct your study, The Phenomenon of Lived Experiences and Perceptions of International Teachers in Implementing the United State Curriculum, with the understanding the school district and any schools used in your research should remain completely confidential. In addition, your study may not intrude on any instructional time and must be completely voluntary and the participants must remain confidential.

I wish you success on your study.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Appendix C

Recruitment Invitation

Recruitment Letter

Date:

Dear International Teachers

I am a doctoral candidate at the American College of Education. I am writing to let you know about an opportunity to participate in a dissertation research study. This study will explore the lived experiences and perceptions of international teachers in implementing the U.S. curriculum.

To participate in this study, you must have earned a United States state teaching license with a minimum of 1-year teaching experience in the school district.

Your participation in the study will be voluntary. If you wish to withdraw from the research at any time, you may do so by contacting me using the information below. I may publish the results of this study; however, I will not use your name nor share the identifiable data you provided. Your information will remain confidential. If you would like additional information about the study, please contact the following:

Kavitha Rathinam

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

If you meet the criteria above and are interested in participating in the study, please read the attached consent to review and accept it by signing the consent. Please forward the signed informed consent via email.

Appendix D

Informed Consent

Prospective Research Participant: Read this consent form carefully and ask as many questions as you like before you decide whether you want to participate in this research study. You are free to ask questions at any time before, during, or after you participated in this research.

Project Information

Project Title: Lived Experiences and Perceptions of International Teachers in Implementing U.S. Curriculum: A Qualitative Phenomenological Study

Researcher: Kavitha Rathinam

Organization: American College of Education

Email: [REDACTED]

Telephone: XXX-XXX-XXXX

Researcher's Faculty Member: [REDACTED]

Organization and Position: American College of Education and Dissertation Chair

Email: [REDACTED]

Introduction

I am Kavitha Rathinam, and I am a doctoral candidate at the American College of Education. I am doing research under the guidance and supervision of my Chair, Dr. Kevin Dartt. I will give you some information about the project and invite you to be part of this research. Before you decide, you can talk to anyone you feel comfortable with about the research. This consent form may contain words you do not understand. Please ask me to stop as we go through the information, and I will explain. If you have questions later, you can ask them then.

Purpose of the Research

You are being asked to participate in a research study that will assist with understanding beliefs and perceptions regarding international teachers' experience in classrooms in the United States. This qualitative phenomenological study will explore the lived experiences and perceptions of international teachers in implementing the U.S. curriculum.

Research Design and Procedures

The study will use a qualitative methodology and phenomenological study research design. Informed consent forms will be disseminated to specific participants within the school district. The study will comprise 15 to 20 participants, purposefully selected, who will participate in the

interview process. The study will involve a semi-structured interview to be conducted via face-to-face and virtual settings through any medium most convenient for participants. None of the research interviews will take place during the work hours.

Participant Selection

You are invited to take part in this research because of your experience as an international teacher with at least one year of teaching in a U.S. classroom. You can contribute much to the phenomenon of lived experiences in the U.S. education system. Participant selection criteria: international teacher, who have at least one year teaching in the school district and earned a United States state teaching license.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. If you choose not to participate, there will be no punitive repercussions. If you select to participate in this study, you may change your mind later and stop participating, even if you agreed earlier.

Procedures

We are inviting you to participate in this research study. If you agree, you will be asked to participate in an interview. The interview can take place face-to-face or virtually whichever is convenient to you. The type of interview questions will be directed to the lived experiences of international teachers in U.S. classrooms. Interviews will be conducted face-to-face, virtual via Zoom or Microsoft Teams. Interviews will be audio recorded and transcriptions of interview recordings will be done using Otter AI. OtterAI is a speech-to-text transcription program to record and reviews transcripts. Initial codes and themes will be generated to find potential patterns.

Duration

The semi-structured interview will require approximately 30-60 minutes to complete. If you choose to be interviewed, the time allotted for the interview will be set at a location and time convenient to you. The interview will be recorded and member checking will be done. The results will be returned to you to check for accuracy.

Risks

The researcher will ask you to share personal and confidential information, and you may feel uncomfortable talking about some of the topics. You do not have to answer any questions or take part in the discussion if you don't wish to do so. You do not have to give any reason for not responding to any question.

Benefits

While there will be no direct financial benefit to you, your participation is likely to help us learn more about the experience of international teachers within U.S. classrooms. The potential benefits of this study will contribute to existing studies and aid recruiters and teachers who anticipate a transition to teaching in the United States.

Reimbursement

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality

I will not share information about you or anything you say to anyone outside of the researcher. During the defense of the doctoral dissertation, the data collected will be presented to the dissertation committee. The data collected will be kept in a password-protected file and locked in a cabinet in the home office. After 3 years, the paper copies of the data will be shredded, and electronic data will be permanently erased from the hard drive and external drive. Any information about you will be coded and will not have any direct correlation that directly identifies you as a participant. Only I will know what your number is, and I will secure your information.

Sharing the Results

At the end of the research study, the results will be available to each participant. The results will be published so that other interested people may learn from the research.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

Participation is voluntary. If at any time you wish to end your participation in the research study, you may do so without repercussion.

Questions About the Study

If you have any questions, you can ask them now or later. If you wish to ask questions later, you may contact Kavitha Rathinam or Dr. Kevin Dartt. This research plan is reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of the American College of Education. This is a committee whose role is to make sure research participants are protected from harm. If you wish to ask questions of this group, email IRB@ace.edu.

Certificate of Consent

I have read the information regarding this study, or it has been read to me. I acknowledge why I have been asked to be a participant in the research study. I have been provided the opportunity to ask questions about the study, and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I certify I am at least 18 years of age. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

Print or Type Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____

Date: _____

I confirm that the participant was given the opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, which has been given freely and voluntarily. A copy of this Consent Form has been provided to the participant.

Print or type the name of the lead researcher: Kavitha Rathinam

Signature of the lead researcher: _____

Date: _____

Signature of faculty member: _____

Date: _____

PLEASE KEEP THIS INFORMATION FORM FOR YOUR RECORDS

Appendix E

Interview Protocol and Questions

Interview Protocol for the Study on the Lived Experiences of International Teachers in Implementing U.S. Curriculum

Participant Pseudonym

Start Time:

Date:

End Time:

Script prior to the interview: *I would like to thank you (participant's name) once again for being willing to participate in the interview. The purpose of my research study will be to explore the lived experiences of international teachers in U.S. classrooms in the education system. The aim of this research is to document your experiences and perceptions in implementing the U.S. curriculum. The duration of the interview will require 30-60 minutes. I will be asking you about you as an international teacher, the benefits of working in the United States, your teaching experience in the U.S. classroom, major challenges, attributes, your greatest strengths, teaching style, and your advice to the international teacher community and recruiters.*

[I will present a copy of the informed consent form for the participant to read.]

By signing the informed consent form, you gave permission to audio record our conversation. Do you still allow me to record our conversation? _____ Yes _____ No

If yes: Thank you! Please let me know if at any point you want me to stop recording.

If no: Thank you for letting me know. I will take notes of our conversation.

Before we begin the interview, do you have any questions? [If yes, discuss; if not proceed]

If there are no further questions, let's get started with the first question.

[Note: the researcher will use phrases such as “Could you tell me more?”, “Could you please elaborate?”, as prompts to get an in-depth understanding]

The semi-structured interview questions will be asked giving enough time for the participant to respond.

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Lived Experiences

1. Why did you choose to become an international teacher?
2. What factors did you consider in taking the opportunity to work in the United States?
3. What benefits are there in working in the United States?
4. In general, explain your teaching experiences in the U.S. classroom
5. What are the major challenges you encountered teaching in the U.S. classroom?
6. Describe a situation in which you did “all the lesson planning” and were still unsuccessful. What did you learn from that experience?
7. How do you compare the education system in your home country to the education system in the United States?
8. What steps did you take to face or eliminate the challenges you experienced in the U.S. education system?

Social Challenges

1. Describe the feelings or emotions that you experienced transitioning from your home country to the United States.
2. What are some social challenges you encountered as an international teacher in the U.S. classroom?

3. What steps did you take to face or eliminate the social challenges you encountered during the transition?

Academic and Technological Challenges

1. Describe the academic challenges you encountered in the U.S. classroom. How did you face or eliminate the challenges?
2. Did you experience technological challenges? If yes, how did you face the challenges?
3. How different are the expectations of the students, parents, and schools about their grades (achievements) in the U.S. school system?

Pedagogical approach

1. Tell a little more about your teaching pedagogy.
2. What do you think are your most important attributes of being a good international teacher?
3. What do you think are your greatest strengths as an international teacher in the U.S. classroom?
4. How do you adjust your teaching style to accommodate the diverse U.S. classrooms?
5. What initiatives have you taken on your own to help prepare yourself to teach in the U.S. classroom?
6. What effort did you take in making the lesson plans dynamic, and connected to the real-world applications with collaboration among local/international teacher(s)?

Recommendations

1. What advice would you give to teachers who seek job opportunities in the U.S.?
2. What suggestions would you give to the school districts recruiting international teachers?

Finally, is there anything else you would like to add about your experiences

Appendix F

Subject Matter Experts' Review

From: Kavitha Rathinam

Sent: Thursday, May 11, 2023 3:02 PM

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: Doctoral Candidate

Good Day,

I am Kavitha Rathinam, a doctoral student at the American College of Education (ACE). I will be conducting research under the guidance and supervision of my chair Dr. Kevin Dartt. The research study will assist with exploring the lived experiences of international teachers in the U.S. classroom. The study will be a qualitative phenomenological study. The data collection method will be a semistructured interview and field notes. I am asking for your scholarly experience in examining the attached interview questions and providing suggestions, if any. Additional questions may also be suggested. I eagerly await and welcome any feedback you may have to offer. Thank you for your support.

Kavitha Rathinam

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, May 12, 2023 3:01 PM
To: Kavitha Rathinam [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Interview questions

Here are the responses. Wishing you the success.

Research questions:

Q.1 looks good.

Besides social, you can add technological and academic challenges that affect the smooth transition if that is in your scope of research.

Q.1 looks good.

Suggestion: Are there any preparations involved in teachers' getting the know-how of curriculum, standards, differentiation, and assessment strategies used in the US?

Lived experiences:

All 8 questions look good and cover this area of research.

Social challenges:

All 3 questions look good and cover this area of research.

Suggestion: How different are the expectations of the students, parents, and schools about their grades (achievements) in the school system?

Pedagogical approach:

All 5 questions look good and cover this area of research.

Suggestion: What effort did you take in making the lesson plans dynamic, connected to the real-world applications with collaboration among local/international teacher(s)?

Recommendations:

Both the questions look good and cover this area of research.

Suggestion: What are the prerequisites for someone to be a successful teacher in the US school system?

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, May 13, 2023 2:28:09 PM
To: Kavitha Rathinam [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Doctoral candidate

Thanks so much for allowing me the opportunity to review your research and interview questions. Upon reviewing them, your interview questions directly relate to your research questions, and I think they will give much-needed context and clarity to the experiences of international teachers in the United States.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, May 17, 2023 3:42:12 PM
To: Kavitha Rathinam [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Doctoral Candidate

Good afternoon Mrs. Rathinam,

I want to first apologize for getting to this so late 😊 Things have been rather hectic at school and home.

I read over your questions a few times—once for grammatical stuff. . . I only found 3 things of concern. Under the section of lived experiences, Q3 needs a ? and Q4 needs a.

In the section Pedagogical Approach, I would reword Q4 at the end to say the diversity of U.S. classrooms.

I think your research questions are strong, and your interview questions are aligned with your research questions.

If you are planning to do your interview questions in person, I would recommend videoing or recording them so that you have those recordings for later reference.

I am excited for you to begin and can't wait to see your results.

One bit of advice, don't wear yourself out writing this thing. Take your time and pace yourself—frustration leads to errors.

LYMI

[REDACTED]

Appendix G**Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval Letter**

December 04, 2023

To : Kavitha Rathinam
Kevin Dartt, Dissertation Committee Chair

From : Institutional Review Board
American College of Education

Re: IRB Approval

"Lived Experiences and Perceptions of International Teachers in Implementing U.S. Curriculum: A Qualitative Phenomenological Study"

The American College of Education IRB has reviewed your application, proposal, and any related materials. We have determined that your research provides sufficient protection of human subjects.

Your research is therefore approved to proceed. The expiration date for this IRB approval is one year from the date of review completion, December 04, 2024. If you would like to continue your research beyond this point, including data collection and/or analysis of private data, you must submit a renewal request to the IRB.

Candidates are prohibited from collecting data or interacting with participants if they are not actively enrolled in a dissertation sequence course (RES6521, RES6531, RES6541, RES6600, RES6551, RES6561, RES6302) and under the supervision of their dissertation chair.

Our best to you as you continue your studies.

Sincerely,

Erin Maurer
Assistant Chair, Institutional Review Board
American College of Education